







# HELEN REDEEMED

AND OTHER POEMS





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## AND OTHER POEMS

BY

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Δῶρον Ἐρωτὶ Αἰδῷ

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## NOTE

THREE of the Poems here published have appeared in book form already, in the Volume called *Songs and Meditations*, long out of print.



## HELEN REDEEMED

### PROEM

SING of the end of Troy, and of that flood  
Of passion by the blood  
Of heroes consecrate, by poet's craft  
Hallowed, if that thin waft  
Of godhead blown upon thee stretch thy song  
To span such store of strong  
And splendid vision of immortal themes  
Late harvested in dreams,  
Albeit long years laid up in tilth. Most  
meet  
Thou sing that slim and sweet  
Fair woman for whose bosom and delight  
Paris, as well he might,  
Wrought all the woe, and held her to his cost.  
And Troy's, and won and lost  
Perforce ; for who could look on her or feel  
Her near and not dare steal  
One hour of her, or hope to hold in bars  
Such wonder of the stars  
Undimmed ? As soon expect to cage the rose



Of dawn which comes and goes  
 Fitful, or leash the shadows of the hills,  
 Or music of upland rills  
 As Helen's beauty and not tarnish it  
 With thy poor market wit;  
 Adept to hue the wanton in the wild,  
 Defile the undefiled !  
 Yet by the oath thou swearest, standing high  
 Where piled rocks testify  
 The holy dust, and from Therapnai's hold  
 Over the rippling world  
 Didst look upon Amyklai's, where sunrise  
 First dawned in Helen's eyes,  
 Take up thy tale, good poet, strain thine art  
 To sing her rendered heart,  
 Given last to him who loved her first, nor  
     swerved  
 From loving, but was nerved  
 To see through years of robbery and shame  
 Her spirit, a clear flame,  
 Eloquent of her birthright. Tell his peace,  
 And hers who at last found ease  
 In white-arm'd Heré, holy husbander  
 Of purer fire than e'er  
 To wife gave Kypris. Helen, and Thee I  
     sing  
 In whom her beauties ring,  
 Fair body of fair mind fair acolyte,  
 Star of my day and night !

## FIRST STAVE

### THE DEATH OF ACHILLES

WHERE Simœis and Xanthos, holy streams,  
Flow brimming on the level, and chance  
gleams

• Betray far Ida through a rended cloud  
And hint the awful home of Zeus, whose  
shroud

The thunder is—'twixt Ida and the main  
Behold gray Ilios, Priam's fee, the plain  
About her like a carpet ; from whose height  
The watchman, ten years watching, every  
night

Counteth the beacon fires and sees no less  
Their number as the years wax and duress  
Of hunger thins the townsmen day by day—  
More than the Greeks kill plague and famine  
slay.

• Here in their wind-swept city, ten long  
years

Beset and in this tenth in blood and tears  
And havocry to fall, old Priam's souls

Guard still their gods, their wives and little  
ones,

Guard Helen still, for whose fair womanhood  
The sin was done, woe wrought, and all the  
blood

Of Danaan and Dardan in their pride  
Shed ; nor yet so the end, for Heré cried  
Shrill on the heights more vengeance on  
wrong done,

And Greek or Trojan paid it. Late or soon  
By sword or bitter arrow they went hence,  
Each with their goodliest paying one man's  
offence.

Goodliest in Troy fell Hector ; back to Greek  
Then swung the doomstroke, and to Dis the  
bleak

Must pass great Hector's slayer. Zeus on  
high,

Hidden from men, held up the scales ; the  
sky

Told Thetis that her son must go the way  
He sent Queen Hecuba's—himself must pay,  
Himself though young, splendid Achilles' self,  
The price of manslaying, with blood for pelf.

A grief immortal took her, and she grieved  
Deep in sea-cave, whereover restless heaved  
The wine-dark ocean—silently, not moving,  
Tearless, a god. O Gods, however loving,  
That is a lonely grief that must go dry  
About the graves where the beloved lie,  
And knows too much to doubt if death ends all

Pleasure in strength of limb, joy musical,  
Mother-love, maiden-love, which never more  
Must the dead look for on the further shore  
Of Acheron, and past the willow-wood  
Of Proserpine !

But when he understood,  
Achilles, that his end was near at hand,  
Darkling he heard the news, and on the strand  
Beyond the ships he stood awhile, then cried  
The Sea-God that high-hearted and clear-eyed  
He might go down ; and this for utmost  
grace

He asked, that not by battle might his face  
Be marred, nor fighting might some Dardan  
best

Him who had conquered ever. For the rest,  
Fate, which had given, might take, as fate  
should be.

So prayed he, and Poseidon out of the sea,  
There where the deep blue into sand doth  
fade

And the long wave rolls in, a bar of jade,  
Sent him a portent in that sea-blue bird  
Swifter than light, the halcyon ; and men  
heard

The trumpet of his praise : “ Shaker of Earth,  
Hail to thee ! Now I fare to death in mirth,  
As to a banquet ! ”

So when day was come  
Lightly arose the prince to meet his doom,  
And kissed Briseis where she lay abed

And never more by hers might rest his head :  
 "Farewell, my dear, farewell, my joy," said  
 he ;

"Farewell to all delights 'twixt thee and me !  
 For now I take a road whose harsh alarms  
 Forbid so sweet a burden to my arms."

Then his clean limbs his weeping squires  
 bedight

In all the mail Hephaistos served his might  
 Withal, of breastplate shining like the sun  
 Upon flood-water, three-topped helm whereon  
 Gleamed the gold basilisk, and goodly greaves.  
 These bore he without word ; but when from  
 sheaves

Of spears they picked the great ash Pelian  
 Poseidon gave to Peleus, God to a man,  
 For no man's manège else—than all men's  
 fear :

"Dry and cold fighting for thee this day, my  
 spear,"

Quoth he. And so when one the golden  
 shield

Immortal, daedal, for no one else to wield,  
 Cast o'er his head, he frowned : "On thy  
 bright face

Let me see who shall dare a dint," he says,  
 And stood in thought full-armed ; thereafter  
 poured

Libation at the tent-door to the Lord  
 Of earth and sky, and prayed, saying : "O  
 Thou

That hauntest dark Dodona, hear me now,  
Since that the shadowing arm of Time is  
flung

Far over me, but cloudeth me full young.  
Scatheless I vow them. Let one Trojan cast  
His spear and loose my spirit. Rage is past  
Though I go forth my most provocative  
Adventure : 'tis not I that seek. Receive  
My prayer Thou as I have earned it—lo,  
Dying I stand, and hail Thee as I go  
Lord of the Ægis, wonderful, most great ! ”

Which done, he took his stand, and bid  
his mate

Urge on the steeds ; and all the Achaian host  
Followed him, not with outcry or loud boast  
Of deeds to do or done, but silent, grim  
As to a shambles—so they followed him,  
Eyeing that nodding crest and swaying spear  
Shake with the chariot. Solemn thus they  
near

The Trojan walls, slow-moving, as by a Fate  
Driven ; and thus before the Skaian Gate  
Stands he in pomp of dreadful calm, to die,  
As once in dreadful haste to slay.

Thereby

The walls were thick with men, and in the  
towers

Women stood gazing, clustered close as  
flowers

That blur the rocks in some high mountain  
pass

With delicate hues ; but like the gray hill-  
     grass  
 Which the wind sweepeth, till in waves of  
     light  
 It tideth backwards—so all gray or white  
 Showed they, as sudden surges moved them<sup>c</sup>  
     cloak  
 Their heads, or bare their faces. And none  
     spoke  
 Among them, for there stood not woman  
     there  
 But mourned her dead, or sensed not in the  
     air  
 Her pendent doom of death, or worse than  
     death.  
 Frail as flowers were their faces, and all breath  
 Came short and quick, as on this dreadful  
     show  
 Staring, they pondered it done far below  
 As on a stage where the thin players seem  
 Unkith to them who watch, the stuff of dream.  
 Nor else about the plain showed living thing  
 Save high in the blue where sailed on out-  
     spread wing  
 A vulture bird intent, with mighty span  
 Of pinion.  
     In the hush spake the dead man,  
 Hollow-voiced, terrible ; “ Ye tribes of Troy,  
 Here stand I out for death, and ye for joy  
 Of killing as ye will, by cast of spear,  
 By bowshot or with sword. If any peer

Of Hector, or Sarpedon care the bout  
Which they both tried aforetime let him out  
With speed, and bring his many against one,  
Fearing no treachery, for there shall be none  
To aid me, God nor man ; nor yet will I  
Stir finger in the business, but will die  
By murder sooner than in battle fall  
Under some Trojan hand."

Breathless stood all,  
Not moving out ; but Paris on the roof  
Of his high house, where snug he sat aloof,  
Drew taut the bowstring home, and notched  
a shaft,  
Soft whistling to himself, what time with craft  
Of peering eyes and narrow twisted face  
He sought an aim.

Swift from her hiding-place  
Came burning Helen then, in her blue eyes  
A fire unquenchable, but cold as ice  
That scorcheth ere it strike a mortal chill  
Upon the heart. "Darest thou . . . ?"

Smiling still,  
He heeded not her warning, nor he read  
The terror of her eyes, but drew and sped  
A screaming arrow, deadly, swerving not—  
Then stood to watch the ruin he had wrought.  
He heard the sob of breath o'er all the host  
Of hushing men ; he marked, but then he  
lost,  
The blood-spurt at the shaft-head ; for the  
• crest



## SECOND STAVE

MENELAUS' DREAM : HELEN ON THE WALL

So he who wore his honour like a wreath  
About his brows went the dark way of death ;  
Which being done, that deed of ruth and  
doom

Gave breath to Troy ; but on the Achaians  
gloom

Settled like pall of cloud upon a land  
That swoons beneath it. Desperate they  
scanned

Each other, saying : " Now we are left by  
God,"

And in the huts behind the wall abode,  
Heeding not Diomedes, Idomeneus,  
Nor keen Odysseus, nor that friend of Zeus  
Mykenai's king, nor that robbed Menelaus,  
Nor bowman Teukros, Nestor wise, nor  
Aias—

Huge Aias, cursed in death ! Peleides bare  
Himself with pride, but he went raving there.  
For in the high assembly Thetis made

In honour of her son, to waft his shade  
In peace to Hades' house, after the fire  
Twice a man's height for him who did suspire  
Twice a man's heart and render it to Heaven  
Who gave it, after offerings paid and given,  
And games of men and horses, she brought  
forth

His regal arms for hero of most worth  
In the broad Danaan host, who was adjudged  
Odysseus by all voices. Aias grudged  
The vote and wandered brooding, drawn  
apart •

From his room-fellows, seeding in his heart  
Envy, which biting inwards did corrode  
His mettle, and his ill blood plied the goad  
Upon his brain, until the wretch made mad  
Went muttering his wrongs, ill-trimmed, ill-  
clad,

Sightless and careless, with slack mouth awry,  
And working tongue, and danger in the eye ;  
And oft would stare at Heaven and laugh  
his scorn :

“O fools, think not to trick me!” then  
forlorn

Would gaze about green earth or out to sea  
“This is the end of man in his degree”—  
Thus would he moralise in those bare lands  
With hopeless brows and tossing up of  
hands—

“To sow in sweat and see another reap !”  
Then, pitying himself, he'd fall to weep

Came in with flush of flower and bird-call  
clear ;  
And Nature, for whom nothing wrought is  
vain,  
Out of shed blood caused grass to spring,  
amain,  
And seemed with tender irony to flout  
Man's folly and pain when twixt dead spears  
sprang out  
The crocus-point and pied the plain with  
fires  
More gracious than his beacons ; and from  
pyres  
Of burnt dead men the asphodel uprose  
Like fleecy clouds flushed with the morning,  
rose,  
A holy pall to hide his folly and pain.  
Thus upon earth hope fell like a new rain,  
And by and by the pent folk within walls  
Took heart and ploughed the glebe and from  
the stalls  
Led out their kine to pasture. Goats and  
sheep  
Cropt at their ease, and herd-boys now did  
keep  
Watch, where before stood armed sentinels ;  
And battle-grounds were musical with bells,  
Of feeding beasts. Afar, high-beacht, the  
ships  
Loomed through the tender mist, their prows  
—like lips

Of thirsty birds which, lacking water, cry  
Salvation out of Heaven—flung on high :  
Which marking, Ilios deemed her worst of  
road  
Was travelled, and held Paris for a God  
Who winged the shaft that brought them all  
this peace.

He in their love went sunning, took his  
ease  
In house and hall, at council or at feast,  
Careless of what was greatest or what least  
Of all his deeds, so only by his side  
She lay, the blush-rose Helen, stolen bride,  
The lovely harbour of his arms. But she,  
A thrall, now her own thralldom plain could  
see,  
And sick of dalliance, loathed herself and  
him  
Who had beguiled her. Now through eyes  
made dim  
With tears she looked towards the salt sea-  
beach  
Where stood the ships, and sought for sign  
in each  
If it might be her people's, and so hers,  
Poor alien !—Argive now herself she avers  
And proudly slave of Paris and no wife :  
Minion she calls herself ; and when to strife  
Of love he claims her, secret her heart surges  
Back to her lord ; and when to kiss he urges,

And when to play he woos her with soft  
words,  
Secret her fond heart calleth, like a bird's,  
Towards that honoured mate who honoured  
her,  
Making her wife indeed, not paramour,  
Mother, and sharer of his hearth and all  
His gear. Thus every night : and on the  
wall  
She watches every dawn for what dawn  
brings.  
And the strong spirit of her took new  
wings  
And left her lovely body in the arms  
Of him who doted, conning o'er her charms,  
And witless held a shell ; but forth as light  
As the first sigh of dawn her spirit took  
flight  
Across the dusky plain to where fires  
gleamed  
And muffled guards stood sentry ; and it  
streamed  
Within the hut, and hovered like a wraith,  
A presence felt, not seen, as when gray Death  
Seems to the dying man a bedside guest,  
But to the watchers cannot be exprest.  
So hovered Helen in a dream, and yearned  
Over the sleeper as he moaned and turned,  
Renewing his day's torment in his sleep ;  
Who presently starts up and sighing deep,  
Searches the entry, if haply in the skies.

The day begin to stir. Lo there, her eyes  
Like waning stars! Lo there, her pale sad  
face

Becurtained in loose hair! Now he can  
trace•

Athwart that gleaming moon her mouth's  
droopt bow•

To tell all truth about her, and her woe•  
And dreadful store of knowledge. • As one  
shockt

To worse than death lookt she, with horror  
lockt

Behind her tremulous tragic-moving lips :  
"O love, O love," saith he, and saying, slips  
Out of the bed : "Who hath dared do thee  
wrong?"

No answer hath she, but she looks him long  
And deep, and looking, fades. He sleeps  
no more,

But up and down he pads the beaten floor,  
And all that day his heart's wild crying  
hears,

And can thank God for gracious dew of  
• tears

And tender thoughts of her, not thoughts of  
shame.

So came the next night, and with night she  
came,

Dream-Helen ; and he knew then he must go  
Whence she had come. His need would  
have it so—

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And her need. Never must she call in vain.

Now takes he way alone over the plain  
Where dark yet hovers like a catafalque  
And all life swoons, and only dead things  
walk,

Uneasy sprites denied a resting space,  
That shudder as they flit from place to place,  
Like bats of flaggy wing that make night  
blink

With endless quest : so do those dead, men  
think,

Who fall and are unserved by funeral rite.

These passes he, and nears the walls of might  
Which Godhead built for proud Laomedon,  
And knows the house of Paris built thereon,  
Terraced and set with gadding vines and trees  
And ever falling water, for the ease  
Of that sweet indweller he held in store.

Thither he turns him quaking, but before  
Him dares not look, lest he should see her  
there

Aglimmer through the dusk and, unaware,  
Discover her fill some mere homely part  
Intolerably familiar to his heart,

And deeply there enshrined and glorified,  
Laid up with bygone bliss. Yet on he hied,  
Being called, and ever closer on he came  
As if no wrong nor misery nor shame  
Could harder be than not to see her—Nay,  
Even if within that smooth thief's arms she  
lay

Besmothered in his kisses—rather so  
Had he stood stabbed to see, than on to  
go  
His round of lonely exile !

Now he stands  
Beneath her house, and on his spear his  
hands

Rest, and upon his hands he grounds his  
chin,

And motionless abides till day come in ;  
Pure of his vice, that he might ease her woe,  
Not brand her with his own. Not yet the  
glow

Of false dawn throbbed, nor yet the silent  
town

Stood washt in light, clear-printed to the  
crown

In the cold upper air. Dark loomed the  
walls,

Ghostly the trees, and still shuddered the  
calls

Of owl to owl from unseen towers. Afar  
A dog barked. High and hidden in the  
haar

Which blew in from the sea a heron cried  
Honk ! and he heard his wings, but not  
espied

The heavy flight. Slow, slow the orb was  
filled

With light, and with the light, his heart was  
thrilled



With opening music, faint, expectant, sharp  
As the first chords one picks out from the  
harp

To prelude paean. Venturing all, he lift  
His eyes, and there encurtained in a drift  
Of sea-blue mantle close-drawn, he espies  
Helen above him watching, her grave eyes  
Upon him fixt, blue homes of mystery  
Unfathomable, eternal as the sea,  
And as unresting.

So in that still place,  
In that still hour stood those two face to  
face.

## THIRD STAVE

MENELAUS SPEAKS WITH HELEN

BUT when he had her there, sharp root  
of ill

To him and his, safeguarded from him still,  
• Too sweet to be forgotten, too much marred  
By usage to be what she seemed, bescarred,  
Behandled, too much lost and too much won,  
Mock image making horrible the sun  
That once had shown her pure for his  
demesne,

And still revealed her lovely, and unclean—  
Despair turned into stone what had been kind,  
And bitter surged his griefs, to flood his  
• mind.

“O ruinous face,” said he, “O evilhead,  
Art thou so early from the wicked bed?  
So prompt to slough the snugness of thy  
vice?

Or is it that in luxury thou art nice  
Become, and dalliest?” Low her head she  
• hung

And moved her lips. As when the night is  
young

The hollow wind presages storm, his moan  
Came wailing at her. "Ten years here,  
alone,

And in that time to have seen thee thrice!"

But she :

"Often and often have I chanced to see  
My lord pass."

His heart leapt, as leaps the child  
Enwombed : "Hast thou—?"

Faintly her quick eyes smiled :  
"At this time my house sleepeth, but I  
wake ;

So have time to myself when I can take  
New air, and old thought."

As a man who skills  
To read high hope out of dark oracles,  
So gleamed his eyes ; so fierce and quick  
said he :

"Lady, O God ! Now would that I could be  
Beside thee there, breathing thy breath, thy  
thought

Gathering !" Silent stood she, memory-  
fraught,

Nor looked his way. But he must know  
her soul,

So harpt upon her heart. "Is this the whole  
That thou wouldst have me think, that thou  
com'st here

Alone to be ?" "

She blushed and dared to peer  
Downward. "Is it so wonderful," she said,  
"If I desire it?" He: "Nay, by my head,  
Not so; but wonderful I think it is  
In any man to suffer it." The hiss

Of passion stript all vesture from his tones  
And showed the King man naked to the  
bones,  
Man naked to the body's utterance.

She turned her head, but felt his burning  
glance  
Scorch, and his words leap up. "Dost thou  
desire

I leave thee then? Answer me that."

"Nay, sire,  
Not so." And he: "Bid me to stay while  
sleeps

Thy house," he said, "so stay I." Her eyes'  
deeps  
Flooded his soul and drowned him in despair,  
Despair and rage. "Behold now, ten years'  
wear

Between us and our love! Now if I cast  
My spear and rove the snow-mound of thy  
breast,

Were that a marvel?"

Long she lookt and grave,  
Pondering his face and searching. "Not so  
brave

My lord as that would prove him. Nay,  
and I know

He would not do it." And the truth was  
so ;

And well he knew the reason : better she.

Yet for a little in that vacancy  
Of silence and unshadowing light they stood,  
Those long-divided, speechless. His first  
mood

With bitter grudge was choked, but hers was  
mild,

As fearing his. At last she named the child,  
Asking, Was all well? Short he told her,  
Yes,

The child was well. She fingered in her dress  
And watched her hand at play there.

"Here," she said,  
"There is no child," and sighed. Into his  
dead

And wasted heart there leaped a flame and  
caught

His hollow eyes. "Rememberest thou  
naught,

Nothing regrettest, nothing holdst in grief  
Of all our joy together ere that thief  
Came rifling in?" For all her answer she

Lookt long upon him, long and earnestly ;  
And misty grew her eyes, and slowly filled.  
Slowly the great tears brimmed, and slowly  
rilled

Adown her cheeks. So presently she hid  
Those wells of grief, and hung her lovely  
head ;

And he had no more words, but only a cry  
At heart too deep for utterance, and too high  
For tears.

And now came Paris from the house  
Into the sun, rosy and amorous,  
As when the sun himself from the sea-rim  
Lifteth, and gloweth on the earth grown dim  
With waiting ; and he piped a low clear call  
As mellow as the thrush's at the fall  
Of day from some near thicket. At whose  
sound

Rose up caught Helen and blushing turned  
her round

To face him ; but in going, ere she met  
The prince, her hand along the parapet  
She trailed, palm out, for sign to who below  
Rent at himself, nor had the wit to know  
In that dumb signal eloquence, and hope  
Therein beyond his sick heart's utmost scope.  
Throbbing he stood as when a quick-blown  
peat,

Now white, now red, burns inly—O wild  
heat,

O ravenous race of men, who'd barter Space  
And Time for one short snatch of instant  
grace !

Withal, next day, drawn by his dear  
desire,

When as the young green burned like  
emerald fire

In the cold light, back to the tryst he came ;  
 But she was sooner there, and called his  
     name

Softly as cooing dove her bosom's mate ;  
 And showed her eyes to him, which half  
     sedate

To be so sought revealed her, half in doubt  
 Lest he should deem her bold to meet the  
     bout

With too much readiness. But high he  
     flaunted

Her name towards the sky. "Thou God-  
     enchanted,

Thou miracle of dawn, thou Heart of the  
     Rose,

Hail thou ! " On his own eloquence he grows  
 The lover he proclaims. "O love," he  
     saith,

"I would not leave thee for a moment's  
     breath,

Nor once these ten long years had left thy  
     side

Had it been possible to stay ! "

She sighed,  
 She wondered o'er his face, she looked her  
     fill,

Museful, still doubting, smiling half, a thrill,  
 All virgin to his praise. "O wonderful,"  
 She said, "Such store of love for one so foul  
 As I am now ! "

    "O fatal hot-and-cold,

O love, whose iris wings not long can hold  
The upper air ! Sudden her thought smote  
hot

On him. "Thou sayest ! True it is, God  
wot !

Warm from his bed, and tears for thy  
unworth ;

Warm from his bed, and tears to meet my  
mirth ;

Then back to his bed ere yet thy tears be  
dry !"

She heard not, but she knew his agony  
Of burning vision, and kept back her tears  
Until his pity moved in tune with hers  
Towards herself. But he from thunderous  
brows

Frowned on. "No more I see thee by this  
house,

Except to slay thee when the hour decree

An end to this vile nest of cuckoldry

And holy vows made hateful, save thou speak  
To each my question sooth. Keep dry thy  
cheek

From tears, hide up thy beauty with thy  
grief—

Or let him have his joy of them, thy thief,

What time he may. Answer me thou, or  
vain

Till thine hour strike to look for me again."

With hanging head and quiet hanging  
hands,



With lip atremble, as caught in fault she  
stands,  
Scarce might he hear her whispered message :  
" Ask,  
Lord, and I answer thee."

Strung to his task :  
" Tell me now all," he said, " from that far  
day •

Whenas embracing thee, I stood to pray,  
And poured forth wine unto the thirsty earth  
To Zeus and to Poseidon, in whose girth  
Lie sea and land ; to Gaia next, their spouse,  
And next to Heré, mistress of my house,  
Traïtress, and thine, for grace upon my  
faring :

For thou wert by to hear me, false arm  
bearing

Upon my shoulder, glowing, lying cheek  
Next unto mine. Ay, and thou prayedst,  
with meek

Fair seeming, prosperous send-off and return.  
Tell me what then, tell all, and let me learn  
With what pretence that dog-souled slaked  
his thirst

In thy sweet liquor. Tell me that the  
first."

Then Helen lifted up her head, and  
beamed  
Clear light upon him from her eyes, which  
seemed  
That blue which, lying on the white sea-bed

And gazing up, the sunbeam overhead  
Would show, with green entinctured, and the  
warp  
Inwoven of golden shafts, blended yet sharp ;  
So that a glory mild and radiant  
Transfigured them. Upon him fell aslant  
That lovely light, while in her cheeks the hue  
Of throbbing dawn came sudden. So he  
knew  
Her best before she spoke : for when she  
spoke  
It was as if the nightingale should croak  
In April midst the first young leaves, so  
bleak,  
So harsh she schooled her throat, that it  
should speak  
Dry matter and hard logic—as if she  
Were careful lest self-pity urged a plea  
Which was not hers to make ; or as one faint  
And desperate lays down all his argument  
Like bricks upon a field, let who will make  
A house of them ; so drily Helen spake  
With a flat voice. “ Thou hadst been nine  
days gone,  
Came my lord Alexandros, Priam's son,  
And hailed me in the hall whereas I sat,  
And claimed his guest-right, which not  
wondering at  
I gave as fitting was. Then came the day  
I was beguiled. What more is there to say ? ”  
Fixt on her fingers playing on the wall

Her eyes were. But the King said : " Tell  
me all.

Thou wert beguiled : by his desire beguiled,  
Or by thine own ? " She shook her head and  
smiled

Most sadly, pitying herself. " Who knoweth  
The ways of Love, whence cometh, whither  
goeth

The heart's low whimper ? This I know,  
he loved

Me then, and pleased only where I moved  
About the house. And I had pleasure too  
To know of me he had it. Then we knew  
The day at hand when he must take the  
road

And leave me ; and its eve we close abode  
Within the house, and spake not. But I  
wept."

She stayed, and whispering down her next  
word crept :

" I was beguiled, beguiled." And then her  
lip

She bit, and rueful showed her partnership  
In sinful dealing.

But he, in his esteem  
Bleeding and raw, urged on. " To Kranai's  
deme

He took thee then ? "

Speechless she bent her head  
Towards her tender breasts whereon, soft  
shed

As upon low quiet hills, the dawn light  
played,

And limned their gentle curves or sank in  
shade.

So gazing, stood she silent, but the King  
Urged on. "From thence to Ilios, thou  
willing,

He took thee?"

Then, "I was beguiled," again  
She said; and he, who felt a worthier strain  
Stir in his gall compassion, and uplift  
Him out of knowledge, saw a blessed rift  
Upon his dark horizon, as tow'rd's night  
The low clouds break and shafted shows the  
light.

"Ten years beguiled!" he said, "but now it  
seems

• Thou art——" She shook her head. "Nay,  
now come dreams;

Nay, now I think, remember, now I see."

"What callest thou to mind?" "Her-  
mione,"

She said, "our child, and Sparta my own  
land,

And all the honours that lay to my hand  
Had I but chosen it, as now I would"—

And sudden hid her face up in her hood,  
Her courage ebb'd in grief, all hardness  
drowned

In bitter weeping.

Noble pity crowned

The greater man in him ; so for a space  
 They wept together, she for loss ; for grace  
 Of gain wept he. " No more," he said, " my  
     sweet,  
 Tell me no more."

                                    " Ah, near the whole of it  
 Before my hour is gone," she cried. But he  
 Groaning, " I dare not stay here lest I see  
 Him take thee again."

                            Both hands to fold her breast,  
 She shook her head ; like as the sun through  
     mist

• Short triumph in her eyes. " Have no more  
     fear

Of him or any——" Then, hearing a stir  
 Within the house, her finger toucht her lip,  
 And one fixt look she gave of fellowship  
 Assured—then turned and quickly went her  
     way ;

And his light vanisht with her for that day .

## FOURTH STAVE

### THE APOLOGY OF HELEN

O SINGING heart, O twice-undaunted lover!  
O ever to be blest, twice blest moreover!  
Twice over win the world in one girl's eyes,  
Twice over lift her name up to the skies;  
Twice to hope all things, so to be twice  
born—

For he lives not who cannot front the morn  
Saying, "This day I live as never yet  
Lived striving man on earth!" What if the  
fret

Of loss and ten years' agonizing snow  
Thy hairs or leave their tracery on thy brow,  
Each line beslotted by the demon hounds  
Hunting thee down o' nights? Laugh at  
thy wounds,  
Laugh at thy eld, strong lover, whose blood  
flows

Clear from the fountain, singing as it goes,  
"She loves, and so I live and shall not die!  
Love on, love her: 'tis immortality.

Once more before the sun he greeted her :  
 She glowed her joy ; her mood was calm and  
 clear

As mellow evening's wheffas, like a priest,  
 Rain has absolved the world, and golden mist  
 Hangs over all like benediction.

In her proud eyes sat triumph on a throne,  
 To know herself beloved, her lover by,  
 So near the consummation. Womanly  
 She dallied with the moment when, all wife,  
 Upon his breast she'd lie and cast her life,  
 Cast body, soul and spirit in one ~~gest~~  
 'Supreme of giving. Glorifying in his quest  
 Of her, now let her hide what he must glean,  
 But not know yet. Ah, sweet to feel his  
 keen

Long eye-search, like the touch of eager  
 fingers,

And sweet to thrill beneath such hot blush-  
 bringers ;

To fence with such a swordsman hazardous  
 And sweet. " Belov'd, thou art glad of me ! "

Then thus

Antiphonal to him she breathes, " Thou  
 sayest ! "

" I see thy light and hail it ! "

" Thou begayest

My poor light. "

" Knowest thou not that thou art loved ? "

" And am I loved then ? "

" If thou'ldst have it proved,

Look in my eyes. Would thine were open  
book !”

“Palimpsest ‘I,” she said, and would not  
look.

But he was grappling now with truth,  
would have it,

What though it cost him all his gain. She  
gave it,

Looking him along. “O lady mine,” he said,  
“Now are my clouds dispersed every shred ;  
For thou art mine ; I think thou lovest me.  
Speak, is that true ?”

She could not, or may be  
She would not hold her gaze, but let it fall,  
And watched her fingers idling on the wall,  
And so remained ; but urged to it by the  
spell

He cast, she whispered down, “I cannot tell  
Thee here, and thus apart”—which when he  
had

In its full import drove him well-nigh mad  
With longing. “Call me and I come !”

But fear  
Flamed in her eyes : “No, no, ’tis death !  
He’s here

At hand. ’Tis death for thee, and worse  
than death—

She ended so—“for both of us.

And breath  
Failed him, for well he knew now what she  
meant,



And sighed his thanks to Gods beneficent.

Thereafter in sweet use of lovers' talk,  
In boon spring weather, whenas lovers walk  
Handfasted through the meadows pied, and  
wet

With dew from flower and leaf, these lovers  
met—

Two bodies separate, one wild heart between,  
Day after day, these two long-severed been ;  
And of this mating of the eye and tongue  
There grew desire passionate and strong  
For body's mating and its testimony,  
Hearts' intimacy, perfect, full and free.

And Helen for her heart's ease did deny  
Her girdled Goddess of the beamy eye,  
Saying, "Come you down, Mistress of sleek  
loves

And panting nights : your service of bought  
doves

And honey-hearted wine may cost too dear.  
What hast thou done for me since first my  
ear

With thy sly music thou didst sign and seal  
Apprentice to thy mystery, teach me feel  
Thy fierce divinity in the trembling touch  
Of open lips? Served I not thee too much  
In Kranai and in Sparta my demesne,  
Too much in wide-wayed Ilios, Eastern  
Queen?

Yes, but it was too much a thousandfold,  
For what was I but leman bought and sold?

“For woman craved what mercy hath man  
brought,  
What face a woman for a woman sought?  
What mercy or what face? And what saith  
she,  
The hunted, scornéd wretch? Boast that  
she be  
Coveted, hankered, spat on? One to gloat,  
The rest to snarl without! If man play goat,  
What must she play? Her glory is it to  
draw  
On greedy eye, sting greedy lip and paw,  
And find the crown of her desire therein?  
Hath she no rarer bliss than all this sin,  
•Is she for dandling, kissing, hidden up  
For hungry hands to stroke or lips to sup?  
Hath she then nothing of her own, no mirth  
In honesty, nor eyes to worship worth,  
Nor pride except in that which makes men  
dogs,  
Nor loathing for the vice wherein, like logs  
That float beneath the sun, lie fair womer  
Submiss, inert receptacles for sin?  
Is this her all? Hath she no heart, nor care  
Therefor? No womb, nor hope therein to  
bear  
Fruit of her heart’s insurgence? Is her face,  
Are these her breasts for fondling, not to  
grace  
Her heart’s high honour, swell to nurture it,  
That it too grow? Hath she no mother-wit,

Nor sense for living things and innocent,  
 Nor leap of joy for this good world's content  
 Of sun and wind, of flower and leaf, and song  
 Of bird, or shout of children as they throng  
 The world of mated men and women? Nay,  
 Persuade me not, O Kypris; but I say •  
 Evil hath been the lore which thou hast  
 taught—

For many have loved my face, and many  
 sought

My breast, and thought it joy supping thereat  
 Sweetness and dear delight; but out of that  
 • What hath there come to them, to me and all  
 Mine but hot shame? Not milk, but bitter  
 gall.”

So in her high passion she rent herself  
 And rocked, or hid her face upon the shelf  
 Of the grim wall, lest he should see the whole  
 Inexpiable sorrow of her soul.

But he by pity pure made bountiful  
 Lent her excuse, by every means to lull  
 Her agony. Said he, “Of mortals who  
 Can e’er withstand the way she wills them to,  
 • Kypris the forceful Goddess? Nay, dear child,  
 Thou wert constrained.”

• She said, “I was beguiled  
 And clung to him until the day-dawn broke  
 When I could read as in the roll of a book  
 His open heart. And then my own heart  
 reeled

To know him craven, dog, not man, revealed  
A panting drudge of lust, who held me here  
Caged vessel. 'Nay, come close. I loved  
him dear,

Too dear, I know ; but never till he came  
Had known the leap of joy, the fire of flame  
Upon the heart he gave me, Paris the bright,  
Whose memory was music and his sight  
Fragrance, whose nearness made my footfall  
dance,

Whose touch was fever, and his burning  
glance

Faintness and blindness ; in whose light my  
life

Centred ; who was the sun, and I, false wife,  
The foolish flower that turns whereso he  
wheels

Over the broad earth's canopy, and steals  
Colour from his strong beam, but at the last  
Whenas the night comes and the day is past  
Droops, burnt at the heart. So loved I him,  
and so

Waxed bold to dare the deed that brought  
this woe."

And there she changed, and bitter was her  
cry :

" Ah, lord, far better had it been to die  
Ere I had cast this pain on thee, and shame  
On me, and wrought such outrage on our  
name.

Natheless I live——"

“ Ay, and give life ! ” he said ;  
 “ Yet this thing more I’d have thee tell—  
     what led  
 Thy thought to me ? ” From him, what  
     turned thy troth—  
 Such troth as there could be ? ”

She cried, “ The oath !  
 The oath ye sware before the Lords of  
     Heaven,  
 The sacrifice, the pledges taken and given  
 When thou and Paris met upon the plain,  
 And all the host sat down to watch you twain  
 Do battle, which should have me. For my  
     part,  
 They took me forth to watch ; as in the mart  
 A heifer feels the giver of the feast  
 Pinch in her flank, and hears the chaffer twist  
 This way and that for so much fat or lean—  
 Even so was I, a queen, child of a queen.”

She bit her lip until the blood ran free,  
 And in her eyes he markt deep injury  
 Scald as the salt tears welled ; but “ Listen  
     yet,”

She said : “ Ye fought, and Paris fell beset  
 Under thy spurning heel, yet felt no whit  
 The bitterness as I must come to it ;  
 For she, his Goddess, hid him up in mists  
 And brought him beat and broken from the  
     lists

Here to his chamber. But I stood and  
     burned,

to be by one lost, by one earned,  
or games, a slave, a bandied thing—  
the oath was made so must I swing  
down to bed. • But while I stood and

fruitless sorrow, up she crept  
his Goddess, gliding like a snake,  
bathed her arms and whispering me  
take

her couch, ‘What oath binds love?’  
say.

him; I must go. He had his way,  
the might who paid that goodly price,  
truth, courage, all, to have his vice :  
which forsook him when those fair  
things fled ;

with my body hath lain in his bed,  
abhors it. And now in truth I wis  
my true heart is where my own heart

together welded and made whole ;  
I go to him and give my soul  
shed and faded body to his nod,  
or take ; and he shall be my God.”  
that made virgin, as all women are  
white purging fire which leaves no

that was soiled and seamed before the  
it  
touched the heart, and the keen  
h

Lickt up the foul misuse of vase so fair  
 As woman's body, Helen flusht and fair  
 Leaned from the wall a fire-hued seraph's  
 face

And in one rapt long look gave and took  
 Grace.

Deep in her eyes he saw the light divine,  
 Quick in him ran fierce joy of it like wine :  
 Light unto light made answer, as a flag  
 Answers when men tell tidings from one crag  
 Unto another, and from peak to peak  
 The good news flashes. Scarcely could he  
 speak

Measurable words, so high his wild thought  
 whirled :

“Bride, Goddess, Helen, O Wonder of the  
 World,

Shall I come for thee?”

Her tender words came soft  
 As dropping rose petals on garden croft  
 Down from the wall's sheer height—“Come  
 soon, come soon.”

And homing to the lines those drummed his  
 tune.

## FIFTH STAVE

A COUNCIL OF THE ACHAIANS :  
THE EMBASSY OF ODYSSEUS

Now calleth he assembly of the chiers,  
Princes and kings and captains, them whose  
•     griefs

To ease his own like treasure had been lent ;  
Who came and sat at board within the tent  
Of him they hailed host-father and their lord  
For this adventure, in aught else abhorred  
Of all true men. He sits above the rest,  
The fox-red Agamemnon, round his crest  
The circlet of his kingship over kings,  
And at his thigh the sword gold-hilted swings  
Which Zeus gave Atreus once ; and in his  
heart

That gnawing doubt which twice had checkt  
his start

For high emprise, having twice egged him to it,  
As stout Odysseus knew who had to rue it.

Beside him Nestor sat, Nestor the old,  
White as the winter moon, with logic cold



Instilled, as if the blood in him had fled  
And in his veins clear spirit ran instead,  
Which made men reasons and not fired their  
sprites.

And next Idomeneus of countless fights,  
Shrewd leader of the Cretans ; by his side  
Keen-flashing Diomedes in his pride,  
The young, the wild in onset, whose war-  
shrill,

Next after Peleus' son's, held all Troy still,  
And stayed the gray crows at their ravelling  
Of dead men's bones. Into debate full fling  
Went he, adone with tapping of the foot  
And drumming on the board. Had but his  
suit

Been granted—so he said—the war were done  
And Troy a name ere full three years had  
gone :

For as for Helen and her daintiness,  
Troy held a mort of women who no less  
Than she could pleasure night when work  
was over

And men came home ready to play the lover ;  
And in housework would better her. Let  
Helen

Be laid by Paris, villain, and dead villain—  
Dead long ago if he had taken the field  
Instead of Menelaus. Then no shield  
Had Kypris' golden body been, acquist  
With his sword-arm already, near the wrist !  
So Diomedes. Next him sat a man

With all his woe to come, the Lokrian  
Aias, son of Oileus, bearded swart,  
Pale, with his little eyes, and legs too short  
And arms too long, a giant when he sat,  
Dwarf else, and in the fight a tiger-cat.  
But mark his neighbour, mark him well : to  
him

Falleth the lot to lay a charge more grim  
On woman fair than even Althaia felt  
Like lead upon her heartstrings, when she  
knelt

And blew to flame the brand that neld the  
life

Of her own son ; or Procne with the knife,  
Who slew and dressed her child to be a meal  
To his own father. But this man's thews  
were steel,

And steely were the nerves about his heart,  
As they had need. Mark him, and mark  
the part

He plays hereafter. Odysseus is his name,  
The wily Ithacan, deathless in his fame  
And in his substance deathless, since he  
goes

Immortal forth and back wherever blows  
The thunder of thy rhythm, O blind King,  
First of the tribe of them with songs to sing,  
Fountain of storied music and its end—  
For who the poet since who doth not tend  
To essay thy leaping measure, or call down  
Thy nodded approbation for his crown •

And all his wages?

Other chiefs sat there  
In order due : as Pyrrhos, very fair  
And young, with high bright colour, and the  
hue

Of evening in his eyes of violet-blue—  
Son of Achilles he, and new to war.  
Then Antiklos and Teukros, best by far  
Of all the bowmen in the host. And last  
Menestheus the Athenian dikast,  
Who led the folk from Pallas's fair home.

To them spake Menelaus, being come  
Into assembly last, and taken in hand  
The spokesman's staff : " Ye princes of our  
land,

Adventurous Achaians, stout of heart,  
Good news I bring, that now we may depart  
Each to his home and kindred, each to his  
hearth

And wife and children dear and well-tilled  
garth,

Contented with the honour he has brought  
To me and mine, since I have what we've  
sought

With bitter pain and loss. Yea, even now  
Hath Heré crowned your strife and earned  
my vow

Made these ten years come harvest, having  
drawn

The veil from off those eyes than which not  
dawn

Holds sweeter light nor holier, once they see.  
Yea, chieftains, Helen's heart comes back to  
me ;

And fast she watches now hard by the wall  
Of the wicked house, and ere the cock shall  
call .

Another morn I have her in my arms  
Redeemed for Sparta, pure of Trojan harms,  
Whole-hearted and clean-hearted as she came  
First, before Paris and his deed of shame  
Threatened my house with wreck, and on his  
own . .

Have brought no joy. This night, disguised,  
alone,

I stand within the city, waiting day ;  
Then when men sleep, all in the shadowless  
gray,

Robbing the robber, I drop down with her  
Over the wall—and lo ! the end of the war ! ”

Thus great of heart and high of heart he  
spake,

And trembling ceased. Awhile none cared  
to break

The silence, like unto that breathless hush  
That holds a forest ere the great winds rush  
Up from the sea-gulf, bringing furious rain  
Like mist to drown all nature, blot the plain  
In one great sheet of water without form.  
So held the chiefs. Then Diomed brake in  
storm.

Ever the first he was to fling his spear

Into the press of battle ; dread his cheer,  
Like the long howling of a wolf at eve  
Or clamour of the sea-birds when they grieve  
And hanker the out-scouring of the net  
Hidden behind the darkness and the wet  
Of tempest-ridden nights. "Princes," he  
cried,

"What say ye to this wooer of his bride,  
For whom it seems ten nations and their best  
Have fought ten years to bring her back to  
nest ?

Is this your meed of honour ? Was it for  
this

You flung forth fortune—to ensure him his ?  
And he made snug at home, we seek our  
lands

Barer than we left them, with emptier hands,  
And some with fewer members, shed that he  
Might fare as soft and trim as formerly !  
Not so went I adventuring, good friend ;  
Not so look I this business to have end :  
Nay, but I fight to live, not live to fight,  
And so will live by day as thou by night,  
Sating my eyes with havoc on this race  
Of robbers of the hearth ; see their strong  
place

Brought level with the herbage and the weed,  
That where they revelled once shrew-mice  
may feed,

And moles make palaces, and bats keep  
house.

And if thou art of spleen so slow to rouse  
As quit thy score by thieving from a thief  
And leave him scatheless else, thou art no  
chief

For Tydeus' son, who sees no end of strife  
But in his own or in his foeman's life."

So he. Then Pyrrhos spake: "By that  
great shade  
Wherein I stand, which thy false Paris made  
Who slew my father, think not so to have  
done

With Troy and Priam; for Peleides' son  
Must slake the sword that cries, and still the  
ghost

Of him that haunts the ingles of this coast,  
Murdered and unacquitted while that man's  
father

Liveth."

Then leapt up two, and both together  
Cried, "Give us Troy to sack, give us our  
fill

Of gold and bronze; give us to burn and  
kill!"

And Aias said, "Are there no women then  
In Troy, but only her? And are we men  
Or virgins of Athené?" And the dream  
Of her who served that dauntless One made  
gleam

His shifting eyes, and stretcht his fleshy lips  
Behind his beard.

Then stood that prince of ships

And shipmen, great Odysseus ; with one hand  
 He held the staff, with one he took command ;  
 And thus in measured tones, with word intent  
 Upon the deed, fierce but not vehement,  
 Drave in his dreadful message. At his sight  
 Clamour died down, even as the wind at night  
 Falls and is husht at rising of the moon.

“ Ye chieftains of Achaia, not so soon  
 Is strife of ten years rounded to a close,  
 Neither so are men seated, friends or foes.  
 For say thus lightly we renounced the meed  
 Of our long travail, gave so little heed  
 To our great dead as find in one man's joy  
 Full recompense for all we've sunk in Troy—  
 Wives desolate, children fatherless, lands,  
 gear,

Stock without master, wasting year by year ;  
 Youth past, age creeping on, friends, brothers,  
 sons

Lost in the void, gone where no respite runs  
 For sorrow, but the darkness covers all—  
 What name should we bequeath our sons but  
 thrall,

Or what beside a name, who let go by  
 Ilios the rich for others' usury ?  
 And have the blessed Gods no say in this ?  
 Think you they be won over by a kiss—  
 Here the Queen, she, the unwearied aid  
 Of all our striving, Pallas the war-maid ?  
 Have they not vowed, and will ye scant their  
 hate,

Havoc on Ilios from gate to gate,  
And for her towers abasement to the dust ?  
Behold, O King, lust shall be paid with lust,  
And treachery with treachery, and for blood  
Blood shall be shed. Therefore let loose the  
flood

Of our pent passion ; break her gates in, raze  
The walls of her, cumber her pleasant ways  
With dead men ; set on havoc, sate with spoil  
Men ravening ; get corn and wine and oil,  
Women to tresp in love, gold, silken things,  
Harness of flashing bronze, swords, meed of  
kings,

Chariots and horses swifter than the wind  
Which, coursing Ida, leaves ruin behind  
Of snapt tall trees : not faster shall they fall  
Than Trojan spears once we are on the wall.  
So only shall ye close this agelong strife,  
Nor by redemption of a too fair wife,  
Now smiling, now averse, now hot, now cold,  
O Menelaus, may the tale be told !  
Nay, but by slaying of Achilles' slayer,  
By the betrayal of the bed-betrayer,  
By not withholding from the spoils of war  
Men freeborn, nor from them that beaten are  
Their rueful wages. Ilios must fall."

He said, and sat, and heard the acclaim of  
all,

Save of the sons of Atreus, who sat glum,  
One flusht, one white as parchment, and both  
dumb ;



One raging to be contraried, one torn  
By those two passions wherewith he was  
born,

The lust for body's ease and lust of gain.

Then slow he rose, Mykenai's king of men,  
Gentle his voice to hear. "Laertes' son,"  
He said, but 'twas Nestor he looked upon,  
The wise old man who sat beside his chair,  
Mild now who once, a lion, kept his lair  
Untoucht of any, or if e'er he left it,  
Left it for prey, and held that ~~when~~ he reft it  
From foe, or over friend made stronger  
claim :

"Laertes' son," the king said, "all men's  
fame

Reports thee just and fertile in device ;  
And as the friend of God great is thy price  
To us of Argos ; for without the Gods  
How should we look to trace the limitless  
roads

That weave a criss-cross 'twixt us and our  
home ?

Go to now, some will stay and other some  
Take to the sea-ways, hasty to depart,  
Not warfaring as men fare to the mart,  
To best a neighbour in some chaffering bout ;  
But honour is the prize wherefor they go out,  
And having that, dishonoured are content  
To leave the foe—that is best punishment.  
Natheless since men there be, Argives or  
worth,

Who needs must shed more blood ere they  
go forth—

As if of blood enough 'had not been spilt!—  
Devise thou with my brother if thou wilt,  
Noble Odysseus, seeking how compose  
His honour with thy judgment. Well he  
knows

Thy singleness of heart, deep ponderer,  
Lover of a fair wife, and sure of her.  
Come, let this be the sum of our debate."

"Content you," Menelaus said, "I wait  
Upon thy word, thou fosterling of Zeus."

Then said Odysseus, "Be it as you choose,  
Ye sons of Atreus. Then, advised, I say  
Let me win into Troy as best I may,  
Seek out the lovely lady of our land  
And learn of her the watchwords, see how  
stand

The sentries, how the warders of the gates;  
The strength, how much it is; what prize  
awaits

To crown our long endeavour. These things  
learned,

Back to the ships I come ere yet are burned  
The watch-fires of the night, before the sun  
Hath urged his steeds the course they are to  
run

Out of the golden gateways of the East."

Which all agreed, and Helen's lord not  
least.

## SIXTH STAVE

HELEN AND PARIS ; ODYSSEUS AND HELEN

LIKE as the sweet free air, when maids the  
doors  
And windows open wide, wanders the floors  
And all the passage ways about the house,  
Keen marshal of the sun, or serious  
The cool gray light of morning 'gins to peer  
Ere yet the household stirs, or chanticlere  
Calls hinds to labour but hints not the glee  
Nor full-flood glory of the day to be  
When round about the hill the sun shall  
swim  
And burn a sea-path—so demure and slim  
Went Helen on her business with swift feet  
And light, yet recollected, and her sweet  
Secret held hid, that she was loved where  
need  
Called her to mate, and that she loved  
indeed—  
Ah, sacred calm of wedlock, passion white  
Of lovers knit in Heré's holy light !

But while in early morn she wonned alone  
And Paris slept, shrill rose her singing tone,  
And brave the light on kindled cheeks and  
eyes :

Brave as her hope is, brave the flag she flies.

Then, as the hour drew on when the sun's  
rim

Should burn a sheet of gold to herald him

On Ida's snowy crest, lithe as a pard

For some lord's pleasuring encaged and  
barréd

She paced the hall soft-footed up and down,

Lightly and feverishly with quick frown

Peered shrewdly this way, that way, like a  
bird

That on the winter grass is aye deterred

His food-searching by hint of unknown  
snare

In thicket, holt or bush, or lawn too bare ;

Anon stopped, lip to finger, while the tide

Beat from her heart against her shielded side—

Now closely girdled went she like a maid—

And then slipped to the window, where she  
stayed

But minutes three or four ; for soon she past

Out to the terrace, there to be at last

Downgazing on her glory, which her king

Reflected up in every motioning

And flux of his high passion. Only here

She triumphed, nor cared she to ask how  
near

The end of Troy, nor hazard a guess  
What deeds must do ere that could come to  
pass.

To her the instant homage held all joy—  
And what to her was Sparta, or what Troy  
Beside the bliss of that?

Or Paris, what  
Was he, who daily, nightly plained his lot  
To have risked all the world and ten years  
loved

This woman, now to find her nothing moved  
By what he had done with her, what desired  
To do? And more she chilled the less he  
tired,

And more he ventured less she cared recall  
What was to her of nothing worth, or all :  
All if the King required it of her, nought  
If he who now could take it. It was bought,  
And his by bargain : let him have it then ;  
But let it be for giving once again,  
And all the rubies in the world's deep heart  
Could fetch no price beside it.

Yet apart  
She brooded on the man who held her  
chained,

Minister to his pleasure, and disdained  
Him more the more herself she must dis-  
parage,

Reflecting on him all her hateful carriage,  
So old, incredible, so flat, so stale,  
No more to be recalled than old wife's tale ;

And scorned him, saw him neither high nor  
low,

Not villain and not hero, who would go  
Midway 'twixt baseness and nobility,  
And not be fierce, if fierceness hurt a flea  
Before his eyes. The man loved one thing  
more

Than all the world, and made his mind a  
whore

To minister his heart's need, for a price.

All which she loathed, yet chose not to be  
nice . .

With the snug-revelling wretch, her master  
yet,

Whose leaguer, though she scorned it, was no  
fret ;

But lift on wings of her exalted mood,  
She let him touch and finger what he would,  
Unconscious of his being—as he saw,  
And with a groan, whipt sharp upon the raw  
Of his esteem, “ Ah, cruel art thou turned,”  
Would cry, “ Ah, frosty fire, where I am  
burned,

Yet dying bless the flame that is my bane !”  
With which to clasp her closer was he fain,  
To touch in love, and feast his eyes to see  
Her quiver at his touch, and laugh to be  
The plucker of such chords of such a rote ;  
And laughing stoop and kiss her milky throat,  
Then see her shut eyes hide what he had done.  
“ Nay, shut them not upon me, nay, nor shun

My worship !” So he said ; but she, “ They ’  
fade,

But are not yet so old ’ as thou hast made  
The soul thou pinnest here beneath my  
breasts

Which you have loved too well.” His hand  
he rests

Over one fair white bosom like a cup,  
And leaning, of her lips his own must sup ;  
But she will not, but gently doth refuse it,  
Without a reason, save she doth not choose it.

Then when he flung away, she sat alone  
And nursed her hope and sorrow, both in  
one

Perturbed bosom ; and her fingers wove  
White webs as far afield her wits did rove  
Perpending and perpending. So frail, so fair,  
So faint she seemed, a wraith you had said  
there,

A woman dead, and not in lovely flesh.  
But all the while she writhed within the mesh  
Of circumstance, and fiercely flamed her rage :  
“ O slave, O minion, thing kept in a cage  
For this sleek master’s handling !” So she  
fumed

What time her wide eyes sought all ways, or  
loomed

Like winter lakes dark in a field of snow,  
And still ; nor lifted they their pall of woe  
Responsive to her heart, nor flashed the  
thrill

That knew, which said, "A true man loveth  
me still."

That same night, as she used, fair Helen  
went

Among the suppliants in the hall, and lent  
To each who craved the bounty of her grace,  
Her gentle touch on wounds, her pitiful face  
To beaten eyes' dumb eloquence, that art  
She above all could use, to stroke the heart  
And plead compassion, in bestowing it.  
So with her handmaids busy did she flit  
From man to man, 'mid outlaws, broken  
blades,

Robbed husbandmen, their robbers, phantoms,  
shades

Of what were men till hunger made them less  
Than man can be and still know uprightness ;  
And whom she spake with kindly words and  
cheer

In him the light of hope began to peer  
And glimmer in his eyes ; and him she fed  
And nourisht, then sent homeward comforted  
A little, to endure a little more.

Now among these, hard by the outer door,  
She marked a man unbent whose sturdy look  
Never left hers for long, whose shepherd's hook  
Seemed not a staff to prop him, whose bright  
eyes

Burned steadily, as fire when the wind dies.  
Great in the girth was he, but not so tall



By a full hand as many whom the wall  
 Showed like gaunt channel-posts by an ebb  
 tide

Left stranded in a world of ooze. Beside  
 His knees she kneeled, and to his wounded  
 feet

Applied her balms ; but he, from his low  
 seat

Against the wall, leaned out and in her ear  
 Whispered, but so that no one else could  
 hear,

“Other than my wounds are there for thy  
 pains,

Lady, and deeper. One, a grievous, drains  
 The great heart of a king, and one is fresh,  
 Though ten years old, in the sweet innocent  
 flesh

Of a young child.”

Nothing said she, but stooped  
 The closer to her task. He thought she  
 drooped

Her head, he knew she trembled, that her  
 shoulder

Twitcht as she wrought her task ; so he grew  
 bolder,

Saying, “ But thou art pitiful ! I know  
 That thou wilt wash their wounds.”

She whispered “ Oh,  
 Be sure of me ! ”

Then he, “ Let us have speech  
 Secret together but of range or reach

Of prying ears, if such a chance may be."

Then she said, "Towards morning look  
for me

Here, when the city sleeps, before the sun."

So till the glimmer of dawn this hardy one  
Keepeth the watch in Paris' house. All  
night

With hard unwinking eyes he sat upright,  
While all about the sleepers lay, like stones  
Littered upon a hill-top, save that moans,  
Sighings and "Gods, have pity!" showed that  
they

By night rehearsed the miseries of day,  
And by bread lived not but by hope deferred.

• Grimly he suffered till such time he heard  
Helen's light foot and faint and gray in  
the mist

Descried her slim 'veiled outline, saw her  
twist

And slip between the sleepers on the ground,  
Atiptoe coming, swift, with scarce a sound,  
Not faltering in fear. No fear she had.

From head to foot a sea-blue mantle clad  
Her lovely shape, from which her pale keen  
face

Shone like the moon in frosty sky. No case  
Was his to waver, for her eyes spake true  
As Heaven upon the world. Him then she  
drew

To follow her, out of the house, to where  
The ilex trees stood darkly, and the air

Struck sharp and chill before the dawn's first  
breath.

There stood a little altar underneath  
An image : Artemis the quick deerslayer,  
High-girdled and barekneed ; to Whom in  
prayer

First bowed, then stood erect with lifted  
hands,

Palms upward, Helen. " Lady of open lands  
And lakes and windy heights," prayed she  
" so do

To me as to Amphion's wife when blew  
The wind of thy high anger, and she stared  
On sudden death that not one dear life spare  
Of all she had—so do to me if false  
I prove unto this Argive ! "

Then the walls  
And gates of Ilios she traced in the sand,  
And told him of the watch-towers, and how  
manned

The gates at night ; and where the treasure  
was,

And where the houses of the chiefs. But as  
She faltered in the tale, " Show now," said he,  
" Where Priam's golden palace is."

But she  
Said, " Nay, not that ; for since the day of  
shame

That brought me in, no word or look of  
blame

Hath he cast on me. Nay, when Hector died

And all the city turned on me and cried  
My name, as to an outcast dog men fling  
Howling and scorn, not one word said the  
King.

And when they hissed me in the shrines of  
the Gods,

And women egged their children on with  
nods

To foul the house-wall, or in passing spat  
Towards it, he, the old King, came and sat  
Daily with me, and often on my hair  
Would lay a gentle hand. Him thou shalt  
spare

For my sake who betray him."

Odysseus said,

"Well, thou shalt speak no more of him.

His bed

Is not of thy making, nor mine, but his  
Who hath thee here a cageling, thy Paris.  
Him he begat as well as Hector. Now  
Let Priam look to reap what he did sow."

But when glad light brimmed o'er the cup  
of earth

And shrill birds called forth men to grief or  
mirth

As might afford their labour under the sun,  
Helen advised how best to get him gone,  
And fetched a roll of cord, the which made  
fast

About a stanchion, about him next she cast,  
About and about until the whole was round

His body, and the end to his arm she bound ;  
Then showed him in the wall where best  
          foothold

Might be, and watcht him down as fold by  
          fold

He paid the cable out ; and as he paid  
So did she twist it, till the coil was made  
As it had been at first. Then watcht she him  
Stride o'er the plain until he twinkled dim  
And sank into the mist.

                                  That day came not  
King Menelaus to the trysting spot ;  
But ere Odysseus left her she had ta'en  
A crocus flower which on her breast had lain,  
And toucht it with her lips. " Give this,"  
          said she,  
" To my good lord who hath seen the flower  
          in me."

## SEVENTH STAVE

THEY BUILD THE HORSE AND ENTER IN

WHAT weariness of wind and wave and  
foam

Was to be for Odysseus ere his home  
Of scrub and crag and scanty pasturage  
He saw again ! What stress of pilgrimage  
Through roaring waterways and cities of  
men,

What sojourn among folk beyond the ken  
Of mortal seafarers in homelier seas,  
More trodden lands ! Sure, none had earned  
his ease

As he, that windless morning when he drew  
Near silent Ithaca, gray in misty blue,  
And wondered on the old familiar scene,  
Which was to him as it had never been  
Aforetime. Say, had he but had inkling  
That in this hour all that long wandering  
Of his was self-ensured, had he been bold  
To plan and carry what must now be told  
Of this too hardy champion ? Solve it you

Whose chronicling is over. Mine's to do.

All day until the setting of the sun,  
Devising how to use what he had won  
Odysseus stood ; for nothing within walls  
Was hid, he knew the very trumpet-calls  
Wherewith they turned the guard out, and  
the cries

The sentries used to hearten or advise  
The city in the watches of the night.  
Once in, no hope for Ilios ; but his plight  
No better stood for that, since no way in  
Could he conceive, nor entry hope to win  
For any force enough to seize the gate  
And open for the host.

But then some Fate  
Or, some men say, Athené the gray-eyed,  
Ever his friend, never far from his side,  
Prompted him look about him. Then he  
heeds

A stork set motionless in the dry reeds  
That lift their withered arms, a skeleton host,  
Long after winter and her aching frost  
Are gone, and rattle in the spring's soft  
breeze

Dry bones, as if to daunt the budding trees  
And warn them of the summer's wrath to  
come.

Still sat the bird, as fast asleep or numb  
With cold, her head half-buried in her breast,  
With close-shut eyes : a dead bird on the  
nest,

Arrow-shot,—for behold ! a wound she bore  
Mid-breast, which stooping to, to see the  
more,

Lo, forth from it came busy, one by one,  
Light-moving ants ! So she to her death  
Had gone

These many days ; and there where she lost  
life

Her carrion shell with it again was 'rife.

So teems the earth, that ere our clay be rotten  
New hosts sweep clean the 'hearth, our deeds  
forgotten.

But stooping still, Odysseus saw her not  
Nor her brisk tenantry ; afar his thought,  
And after it his vision, crossed the plain  
And lit on Ilios, dim and lapt in rain,  
Piled up like blocks which Titans rear to  
mark

Where hero of their breed sits stiff and stark,  
Spear in dead hand, and dead chin on dead  
knees ;

And “ Ha,” cried he, “ proud hinderer of our  
ease,

Now hold I thee within my hollowed hand ! ”

Straightway returning, Troy's destruction  
planned,

He sends for one Epeios, craftsman good,  
And bids him frame him out a horse in wood,  
Big-bellied as a ship of sixty oars  
Such as men use for traffic, not in wars,  
Nor piracy, but roomy, deep in the hold,



Where men may shelter if needs be from cold,  
Or sleep between their watches. "Scant not  
you,"

He said, "your timber, not your sweat.  
Drive through

This horse for me, Epeios, as if we  
Awaited it to give the word for sea  
And Hellas and our wives and children dear ;  
For this is true, without it we stay here  
Another ten-year shift, if by main force  
We would take Troy, but ten days with my  
horse."

So to their task Epeios and his teams  
Went valiantly, and heaved and hauled great  
beams

Of timber from far Ida, and hacked amain  
And rought the framework out. Then to it  
again

They went with adzes and their smoothing  
tools,

And made all shapely ; next bored for their  
dools

With augurs, and made good stock on, to  
stock

With mortise and with dovetail. Last, they  
lock

The frames with clamps, the nether to the  
upper,

And body forth a horse from crest to crupper  
In outline.

Now their ribbing must be shaped

With axe to take the round, first rought,  
then scraped  
With adzes, then deep mortised in the frame  
To bear the weight of so much mass, whose  
fame  
When all was won, the Earth herself might  
quake,  
Supporting on her broad breast. Now they  
take  
Planks sawn and smoothed, and set them  
over steam  
Of cauldrons to be supple. These to the  
beam  
Above they rivet fast, and bend them down  
Till from the belly more they seem to have  
grown  
Than in it to be ended, so well sunk  
And grooved they be. There's for the  
horse's trunk.  
But as for head and legs, these from the block  
Epeios carved, and fixed them on the stock  
With long pins spigotted and clamps of  
steel;  
And then the tail, downsweeping to the heel,  
He carved and rivetted in place. Yet more  
He did; for cunningly he made a door  
Beneath the belly of him, in a part  
Where Nature lends her aid to sculptor's art,  
And few would have the thought to look  
for it,  
Or eyes so keen to find, if they'd the wit.

Greatly stood he, hogmaned, with wrinkled  
 neck  
 And wrying jaw, as though upon the check  
 One rode him. On three legs he stood, with  
 one  
 Pawing the air, as if his course to run  
 Was overdue. Almost you heard the champ  
 And clatter of the bit, almost the stamp  
 And scrape of hoof; almost his fretful crest  
 He seemed to toss on high. So much confest  
 The wondering host. "But where's the man  
 to ride?"  
 They askt. Odysseus said, "He'll go inside.  
 Yet there shall seem a rider—nay, let two  
 Bespan so brave a back." Epeios anew  
 He spurred, and had his horsemen as he would,  
 Two noble youths, star-frontletted, but nude  
 Of clothing, and unarmed, who sat as though  
 Centaurs not men, and with their knees did  
 show  
 The road to travel. Next Odysseus bid,  
 "Gild thou me him, Epeios"; which he did,  
 And burnisht after, till he blazed afar  
 Like that great image which men hail for a  
 star  
 Of omen holy, image without peer,  
 Chryselephantine, Athéné with her spear,  
 Shining o'er Athens; to which their course  
 they set  
 When homeward faring through the seaways  
 wet

From Poros or from Nauplia, or some  
From the Eubœan gulf, or where the foam  
Washes the feet of Sounion, on whose brow  
Like a white crown the shafts burn even now.

Such was the shaping of the Horse of Wood,  
The bane of Ilios.

Ordered now they stood  
Midway between the ships and Troy, and cast  
The lots, who should go in from first to last  
Of all the chieftains chosen. And the lot  
Leapt out of Diomedes, so in he got  
And sat up in the neck. Next Aias went,  
Clasping his shins and blinking as he bent,  
Working the ridges of his villainous brow,  
Like puzzled, patient monkey on a bough  
That peers with bald, far-seeing eyes, whose  
scope

And steadfastness seem there to mock our  
hope ;

Next Antiklos, and next Meriones  
The Cretan ; next good Teukros. After  
these

Went Pyrrhos, Agamemnon, King of men,  
Menestheus and Idomeneus, and then  
King Menelaus ; and Odysseus last  
Entered the desperate doorway, and made  
fast.

And all the Achaian remnant, seeing their  
best

To this great venture finally address,  
Stood awed in silence ; but Nestor the old

Bade bring the victims, and these on the wold  
 In sight of Troy he slew, and so uplift  
 The smoke of fire, and bloodsmoke, as a gift  
 Acceptable to Him he hailed by name  
 Kronion, sky-dweller, who giveth fame,  
 Lord of the thunder; to Heré next, and  
 Her,

The Maid of War and holy harbinger  
 Of Father Zeus, who bears the Aegis dread  
 And shakes it when the storm peals overhead  
 And lightning splits the firmament with fire;  
 Nor yet forgot Poseidon, dark-haired sire  
 Of all the seas, and of great Ocean's flow,  
 The girdler of the world. So back with slow  
 And pondered steps they all returned, and  
 dark

Swallowed up Troy, and Horse, and them  
 who stark

Abode within it. And the great stars shone  
 Out over sea and land; and speaking none,  
 Nursing his arms, nursing within his breast  
 His enterprise, each hero sat at rest  
 Ignorant of the world of day and night,  
 Or whether he should live to see the light,  
 Or see it but to perish in this cage.  
 Only Odysseus felt his heart engage  
 The blithelier for the peril. He was stuff  
 That thrives by daring, nor can dare enough.

Three days, three nights before the Skaian  
 Gate

Sat they within their ambush, apt for fate ;  
Three days, three nights, the Trojans swarmed  
the walls

And towers or held high council in their  
halls

What this portended, this o'erweening mass  
Reared up so high no man stretching could  
pass

His hand over the crupper, of such girth  
Of haunch, to span the pair no man on earth  
Could compass with both arms. But most  
their eyes — —

Were for the riders who in godlike guise  
Went naked into battle, as Gods use,  
Untrammel'd by our shifts of shields and  
shoes,

As if we dread the earth whereof we are.  
Sons of God, these : for bore not each a star  
Ablaze upon his forelock ? Lo, they say,  
Kastor and Polydeukes, who but they,  
Come in to save their sister at the last,  
And war for Troy, and root King Priam  
fast

In his demesne, him and his heirs for ever !  
Now call they soothsayers to make endeavour  
With engines of their craft to read the thing ;  
But others urge them hale it to the King—  
“ Let him dispose,” they say, “ of it and us,  
And order as he will, from Pergamos  
To heave it o'er the sheer, and bring to  
wreck ;

Or burn with fire; or harbour to, bedeck  
 The temple of some God : of three ways one.  
 Here it cannot abide to flout the sun  
 With arrogant flash for every beam of his."

Herewith agreed the men of mysteries,  
 Raking the bloodsick earth to have the truth,  
 And getting what they lookt for, as in sooth  
 A man will do. So then they all fell to't  
 To hale with cords and lever foot by foot  
 The portent; and as frenzy frenzy breeds,  
 And what one has another thinks he needs,  
 So to a straining twenty other score  
 Lent hands, and ever from the concourse  
 more  
 Of them, who hauled as if Troy's life de-  
 pended  
 On hastening forward that wherein it ended.  
 So came the Horse to Troy, so was filled up  
 With retribution that sweet loving-cup  
 Paris had drunk to Helen overseas—  
 The cup which whoso drains must taste the  
 lees.

## EIGHTH STAVE

THE HORSE IN TROY ; THE PASSION OF  
KASSANDRA

HIGH over Troy the windy citadel,  
Pergamos, towereth, where is the cell  
And precinct of Athené. There, till reived,  
They kept the Pallium, sacred and still  
grieved

By all who held the city consecrate  
To Her, as first it was, till she learned hate  
For what had once been lovely, and let in  
The golden Aphrodité, and sweet sin  
To ensnare Prince Paris and send him awooing  
A too-fair wife, to be his own undoing  
And Troy's and all the line's of Dardanos,  
That traced from Zeus to him, from him to  
Tros,

From Tros to Ilos, to Laomedon,  
Who begat Priam as his second son.  
But out of Troy Assarakos too came,  
From whom came Kapys ; and from him the  
fame



Of good Anchises, with whom Kypri<sup>s</sup> lay  
In love and got Aineias. He, that day  
Of dreadful wrath, safe only out did come,  
And buildd great Troy's line in greater  
Rome.

Now to the forecourt flock the Trojan  
folk  
To view the portent. Now they bring to  
yoke

Priam's white horses, that the stricken king  
Himself may see the wonder-working thing,  
Himself invoke with his frail trembling voice  
The good Twin Brethren for his aid and  
Troy's.

So presently before it Priam stands,  
Father and King of Troy, with feeble hands  
And mild pale eyes wherein Grief like a  
ghost

Sits ; and about him all he has not lost  
Of all his children gather, with grief-worn  
Andromaché and her first, and last, born,  
The boy Astyanax. And there apart

• The wise Aineias stands, of steadfast heart  
But not acceptable—for some old grudge  
Inherited—Aineias, silent judge  
Of folly, as he had been since the sin  
Of Paris knelled the last days to begin  
But he himself, that Paris, came not out,  
But kept his house in these his days of  
doubt,

Uncertain of his footing, being of those

On whom the faintest breath of censure  
blows

Chill as the wind that from the frozen North  
Palsies the fount o' the blood. He dared not  
forth

Lest men should see—and how not see? he  
thought—

That Helen held him lightlier than she ought.

But Helen came there, gentle as of old,  
Self-held, sufficient to herself, not bold,  
Not modest nor immodest, taking none  
For judge or jury of what she may have  
done ;

But doing all she was to do, sedate,  
Intent upon it and deliberate.

As she had been at first, so was she now  
When she had put behind her her old vow  
And had no pride but thinking of her new.  
But she was lovelier, of more burning hue,  
And in her eyes there shone, for who could  
see,

A flickering light, half scare and half of glee,  
Which made those iris'd orbs to wax and  
• wane

Like to the light of April days, when rain  
And sun contend the sovereignty. She kept  
Beside the King, and only closer crept  
To let him feel her there when some harsh  
word

Or look made her heart waver. Many she  
heard,

And much she saw, but knew the King her  
friend,

Him only since great Hector met his end.

And while so pensive and demure she stood,  
With one thin hand just peeping at her hood,  
The which close-folded her from head to  
knee,

Her heart within her bosom hailed her—  
“Free!

Free from thy thralldom, free to save, to give,  
To love, be loved, again, and die to live!”

So she—yet who had said, to see her there,  
The sweet-faced woman, blue-eyed, still and  
fair

As windless dawn in some quiet mountain  
place,

To such a music let her passion race?

Now hath the King his witless welcome  
paid,

And now invoked the gods, and the cold  
shade

Which once was Hector; now, being upheld  
By two his sons, with shaking hands of eld.  
The knees of those two carved and gilded  
youths

He touches while he prays, and praying  
soothes

The crying heart of Helen. But not so  
Kassandra views him pray, that well of woe  
Kassandra, she whom Loxias deceived

With gift to see, and not to be believed ;  
To read within the heart of Time all truth  
And see men blindly blunder, to have ruth,  
To burn, to cry, "Out, haro!" and be a  
mock—

Ah, and to know within this gross wood-  
block

The fate of all her kindred, and her own,  
Unthinkable! Now with her terror blown  
Upon her face, to blanch it like a sheet,  
Now with bare frozen eyes which only greet  
The viewless neighbours of our world she  
strips

The veil and shrieketh Troy's apocalypse :  
"Woe to thee, Ilios! The fire, the fire!  
And rain,

Rain like to blood, and tears to drown the  
plain

And cover all the earth up in a shroud,  
One great death-clout for thee, Ilios the  
proud!

Touch not, handle not——" Outraged then,  
she turned

To Helen—"O thou, for whom Troy shall  
be burned,

O ruinous face, O breasts made hard with  
gall,

Now are ye satisfied? Ye shall have all,  
All Priam's sons and daughters, all his race  
Gone quick to death, hailing thee, ruinous  
face!"

Her tragic mask she turned upon all men :  
 " The lion shall have Troy, to make his den  
 Within her pleasant courts, in Priam's high  
     seat

Shall blink the vulture, sated of his meat ;  
 And in the temples emptied of their Gods  
 Bats shall make quick the night, and panting  
     foads

Make day a loathing to the light it brings.  
 Listen ! Listen ! they flock out ; heed  
     their wings. •

The Gods flee forth of this accursed haunt,  
 And leave the memory of it an old chant,  
 A nursery song, an idle tale that's told  
 To children when your own sons are grown  
     old •

In Argive bonds, and have no other joy  
 Than whispering to their offspring tales of  
     Troy."

Whereat she laught—O bitter sound to  
     hear !

And struggled with herself, and grinned with  
     fear

And misery lest even now her fate  
 Should catch her and she be believed too late.  
 " Is't possible, O Gods ! • Are ye so doomed  
 As not to know this Horse a mare, enwombed  
 Of men and swords ? Know ye not there  
     unseen

The Argive princes wait their dam shall  
     n ?

Anon creeps Sparta forth, to find his balm  
In that vile woman ; forth with itching palm  
Mykenai creeps, snuffing what may be won  
By filching ; forth Pyrrhos the braggart's  
son

That dared do violence to Hector dead,  
But while he lived called Gods to serve his  
stead ;

Forth Aias like a beast, to mangle me—  
These things ye will not credit, but I see.”  
Then once again, and last, she turned her  
switch

On Helen, hissing, “ Out upon thee, witch,  
Smooth-handed traitress, speak thy secrets  
out

That we may know thee, how thou goest  
about

Caressing, with a hand that hides a knife,  
That which shall prove false paramour, false  
wife,

Fair as the sun is fair that smiles and slays”—  
And then, “ O ruinous face, O ruinous  
face ! ”

But nothing more, for sudden all was gone,  
Spent by her passion. Muttering, faint and  
wan

Down to the earth she sank, and to and fro  
Rocking, drew close her hood, and shrouded  
so,

Her wild voice drowning, died in moans  
away.

But Helen stood bright-eyed as glancing  
day,  
Near by the Horse, and with a straying hand  
Did stroke it here and there, and listening  
stand,  
Leaning her head towards its gilded flank,  
And strain to hear men's breath behind the  
plank ;  
And she had whispered if she dared some  
word  
Of promise ; but afraid to be o'erheard,  
Leaned her head close and toucht it with  
her cheek,  
Then drew again to Priam, schooled and  
meek.  
But Menelaus felt her touch, and mum  
Sat on, nursing his mighty throw to come ;  
And Aias started, with some cry uncouth  
And vile, but fast Odysseus o'er his mouth  
Clapt hand, and checkt his foul persever-  
ance  
To seek in every deed his own essence.

Now when the ways were darkened, and  
the sun  
Sank red to sea, and homeward all had gone  
Save that distraught Cassandra, who still  
served  
The temple whence the Goddess long had  
swerved,  
Athéné, hating Troy and loving them

Who craved to snatch and make a diadem  
Of Priam's regal crown for other brows—  
She, though foredoomed she knew, held to  
her vows, . .

And duly paid the thankless evening rite—  
There came to Paris' house late in the night  
Deiphobus his brother, young and trim,  
For speech with fair-tressed Helen, for whose  
slim

And budded grace long had he sighed in  
vain ;

And found her in full hall, and showed his  
pain

And need of her. To whom when she  
draws close

In hot and urgent crying words he shows  
His case, hers now, that here she tarry not.  
Lest evil hap more dread than she can wot :  
“For this,” he says, “is Troy's extremest  
hour.”

But when to that she bowed her head, the  
power

Of his high vision made him vehement :

“Dark sets the sun,” he cried, “and day is  
spent” ;

But she said, “Nay, the sun will rise with  
day,

And I shall bathe in light, lift hands and  
pray.”

“Thou lift up hands, bound down to a  
new lord !”



He mocked ; then whispered, "Lady, with  
a sword

I cut thy bonds if so thou wilt.

She moved : "No sword, but a cry of the  
heart

Shall loose me."

Then he said, "Hear what I cry  
From my heart unto thine : fly, Helen, fly !"

Whereat she shook her head and sighed,

"Even so,

Brother, I fly where thou canst never go.

Far go I, out of ken of thee and thy peers."

He knew not what she would, but said,

"Thy fears

Are of the Gods and holy dooms and Fate,

But mine the present menace in the gate.

This I would save thee."

"I fear it not," said she,

"But wait it here."

He cried, "Here shalt thou see  
Thy Spartan, and his bitter sword-point feel  
Against thy bosom."

"I bare it to the steel,"

Saith she. He then, "If ever man deserved  
thee

By service, I am he, who'd die to serve thee."

Glowing she heard him, being quickly  
moved

By kindness, loving ever where she was  
loved.

But now her heart was fain for rest ; the  
night

Called her to sleep and dreams. So with a  
light

And gentle hand upon him, " Brother, fare-  
well."

She said, " I stay the issue, and foretell  
Honour therein at least."

Then at the door  
She kissed him. And she saw his face no  
more.

## NINTH STAVE

### THE GODS FORSAKE TROY

Now Dawn came weeping forth, and on  
the crest  
Of Ida faced a chill wind from the West.  
Forth from the gray sea wrack-laden it blew  
And howled among the towers, and stronger  
grew  
As crept unseen the sun his path of light.  
Then she who in the temple all that night  
Had kept her rueful watch, the prophetess  
Kassandra, peering sharply, heard the press  
And rush of flight above her, and with sick  
Foreboding waited ; and the air grew thick  
With flying shapes immortal overhead.  
As in late Autumn, when the leaves are  
shed  
And dismal flit about the empty ways,  
And country folk provide against dark days,  
And heap the woodstack, and their stores  
repair,  
Attent you know the quickening of the air,

And closer yet the swish and sweep and  
swing  
Of wings innumerable, emulous to bring  
The birds to broader skies and kindlier sun,  
And know indeed that winter is begun—  
So seeing first, then hearing, she knew the  
hour  
Was come when Troy must fall, and not a  
tower  
Be left to front the morrow. And she  
covered  
Her head and mourned, while one by one  
they hovered  
Above their shrines, then flockt and faced  
the dawn.

First, in her car of shell and amber,  
drawn  
By clustering doves with burnisht wings, a-  
throng,  
Passes Queen Aphrodité, and her song  
Is sweet and sharp: "I gave my sacred  
zone  
To warm thy bosom, Helen which by none  
That live by labour and in tears are born  
And sighing go their ways, has e'er been  
worn.  
It kindled in thine eyes, the lovelight, showed  
Thy burning self in his. Thy body glowed  
With beauty like to mine: mine thy love-  
laughter

Thy cooing in the night, thy deep sleep  
after,

Thy rapture of the morning; love renewed;  
And all the shadowed day to sit and brood  
On what has been and what should be again:  
Thou wilt not? Nay, I proffer not in vain  
My gifts, for I am all or will be nought.  
Lo, where I am can be no other thought."

Thus to the wooded heights of Ida she  
Was drawn, hid in that pearly galaxy  
Of snow-white pigeons

Next upon the height  
Of Pergamos uplift a beam of light  
That for its core enshrined a naked youth,  
Golden and fierce. She knew the God sans  
ruth,

Him who had given woeful prescience to  
her,

Apollo, once her lover and her wooer;  
Who stood as one stands glorying in his  
grace

And strength, full in the sun, though on her  
place

Within the temple court no sun at all  
Shone, nor as yet upon the topmost wall  
Was any tinge of him, but all showed gray  
And sodden in the wind and blown sea-  
spray.

Not to him dared she lift her voice in  
prayer,

Not scarce her eyes to see him.

To him there  
 Came swift a spirit in shape of virgin slim,  
 With snooded hair and kirtle belted trim,  
 Short to the knee,; and in her face the gale  
 Had blown bright sanguine colour. Free  
 and hale

She was ; and in her hand she held a bow  
 Unstrung, and o'er her shoulders there did  
 go

A baldrick that made sharp the cleft betwixt  
 Her sudden breasts—to that a quiver fixt,  
 Showing gold arrow-points. No God  
 there is

In Heaven more swift than Delian Artemis,  
 The young, the pure health-giver of the  
 Earth,

Who loveth all things born, and brings to  
 birth,

And after slays with merciful sudden death—  
 In whom is gladness all and wholesome  
 breath,

And to whom all the praise of him who  
 writes,

Ever.

These two she saw like meteorites  
 Flare down the wind and burn afar, then  
 fade.

And Leto next, a mother grave and staid,  
 Drove out her chariot, which two winged  
 stags drew,

Swift following, robed in gown of inky blue.

And hooded ; and her hand which held the  
hood

Gleamed like a patch of snow left in a wood  
Where hyacinths bring down to earth the  
sky.

And in her wake a winging company,  
Dense as the cloud of gulls which from a  
rock

At sea lifts up in myriads, if the knock  
Of oars assail their peace, she saw, and  
mourned

The household gods. For outward they  
too turned,

The spirits of the streams and water-brooks,  
And nymphs who haunt the pastures, or in  
nooks

Of woodlands dwell. There like a lag of  
geese

Flew in long straying lines the Oreades  
That in wild dunes and commons have their  
haunt ;

There sped the Hamadryads ; there aslant,  
As from the sea, but wheeling ere they crost  
Their sisters, thronged the river-nymphs, a  
host ;

And now the Gods of homestead and the  
hearth,

Like sad-faced mourning women, left the  
garth

Where each had dwelt since Troy was  
stablished ;

And been the holy influence over bed  
And board and daily work under the sun  
And nightlong slumber when day's work was  
done :

They rose, and like a driven mist of rain  
Forsook the doomed high city and the plain,  
And drifted eastaway ; and as they went  
Heaviness spread o'er Ilios like a tent,  
And past not off, but brooded all day long.

But ever coursed new spirits to the throng  
That packt the ways of Heaven. From the  
plain,

From mere and holt and hollow rose amain  
The haunters of the silence ; from the  
streams •

And wells of water, from the country demes,  
From plough and pasture, bottom, ridge  
and crest

The rustic Gods rose up and joined the rest.  
Like a long wisp of cloud from out his banks  
Streamed Xanthos, that swift river, to the  
ranks

Of flying shapes ; and driven by that same  
mind

That urged him to it came *ἄνιμος* behind,  
And other Gods and other, of stream and  
tree

And hill and vale—for nothing there can be  
On earth or under Heaven, but hath in it  
Essence whereby alone its form may hit



Our apprehension, channelled in the sense  
Which feedeth us, that we through vision  
dense

See Gods as trees walking, or in the wind  
That singeth in the bents guess what's  
behind

Its wailing music.

And now the unearthly flock,  
Emptying every water, wood, bare rock  
And pasture, beset Ida, and their wings  
Beat o'er the forest which about her springs  
And makes a sea of verdure, whence she lifts  
Her soaring peaks to bathe them in the  
drifts

Of cloud, and rare reveal them unto men—  
For Zeus there hath his dwelling, out of ken  
Of men alike and gods. But now the brows,  
The breasting summits, still eternal snows,  
And all the faces of the mountain held  
A concourse like in number to the field  
Of Heaven upon some breathless summer  
night

Printed with myriad stars, some burning  
bright,

Some massed in galaxy, a cloudy scar,  
And others faint, as infinitely far.

There rankt the Gods of Heaven, Earth, and  
Sea,

Brethren of them now hastening from the fee  
Of stricken Priam. Out of his deep cloud  
Zeus flamed his levin, and his thunder loud

Volleyed his welcome. With uplifted hands  
Acclaiming God's oncoming each God stands  
To greet. And thus the Hierarchy at one  
Sits to behold the bitter business done  
Which Paris by his luxury bestirred.

But in the city, like a stricken bird  
Grieving her desolation and despair,  
As voiceless and as lustreless, astare  
For imminent Death, Kassandra croucht  
beneath  
Her very doom, herself the bride of Death ;  
For in the temple's forecourt reared the mass  
Of that which was to bring the woe to pass,  
And hidden in him both her murderers  
Wrung at their nails.

And slow the long day wears  
While all the city broods. The chiefs keep  
house,

Or gather on the wall, or make carouse  
To simulate a freedom they feel not ;  
And at street corners men in shift or plot  
Whisper together, or in the market-place  
Gather, and peer each other in the face  
Furtively, seeking comfort against care ;  
Whose eyes, meeting by chance, shift other-  
where

In haste. But in the houses, behind doors  
Shuttered and barred, the women scrub their  
floors,  
Or ply their looms as busily : for they

Ever cure care with care, and if a day  
 Be heavy lighten it with heavier task ;  
 And for their griefs wear beauty like a mask,  
 And answer heart's presaging with a song  
 On their brave lips, and render right for  
     wrong.

Little, by outward seeming, do they know  
 Of doom at hand, of fate or blood or woe,  
 Nor how their children, playing by their  
     knees,

Must end this day of busyness-at-ease  
 In shrieking night, with clamour for their  
     bread,

And a red bath, and a cold stone for a bed  
 Under the staring moon.

Now sinks the sun  
 Blood-red into the heavy sea and dun,  
 And forth from him, as he were stuck with  
     swords,

Great streams of light go upward. Then  
     the lords

Of havoc and unrest prepare their storms,  
 And o'er the silent city, vulture forms—  
 Eris and Enyo. Alké, Ioké,  
 The biter, the sharp-bitten, the mad, the  
     fey—

Hover and light on pinnacle and tower :  
 The gray Erinnyes, watchful for the hour  
 When Haro be the wail. And down the sky  
 Like a white squall flung Até with a cry

That sounded like the wind in a ship's  
shrouds,  
As shrill and wild at once. The driving  
clouds

Surging together, blotted out the sea,  
The beached ships, the plain with mound and  
tree,  
And slantwise came the sheeted rain, and  
fast

The darkness settled in. Cassandra cast  
Her mantle o'er her head, and with slow feet  
Entered her shrine deserted, there to greet  
Her fate when it should come ; and merciful  
Sleep

Befriended her.

Now from his lair did creep  
Odysseus forth unarmed, his sword and spear  
There in the Horse, and warily to peer  
And spy his whereabouts the Ithacan  
Went doubtful. Then his dreadful work  
began,

As down the bare way of steep Pergamos  
Under the dark he sought for Paris' house.

## TENTH STAVE .

ODYSSEUS COMES AGAIN TO PARIS' HOUSE

THERE in her cage roamed Helen light and  
fierce,

Unresting, with bright eyes and straining ears,  
Nor ever stayed her steps ; but first the hall  
She ranged, touching the pillars ; next to  
the wall

Went out and shot her gaze into the murk  
Whereas the ships should lie ; then to her  
work

Upon the great loom turned and wove a  
shift,

But idly, waiting always for some lift  
In the close-wrapping fog that might discover  
The moving 'hosts, the 'spear-men of her  
lover—

Lover and husband, master and lord of life,  
Coming at last to take a slave to wife.

And as wide-eyed she stared to feel her heart  
Leap to her side, she felt the warm tears  
start,

And thank the Goddess for the balm they  
brought.

Yet to her women, withal so highly wrought  
By hope and care, and waiting, she was mild  
And gentle-voiced, and playful as a child  
That saps the moment's joy, and nothing  
heeds

Time past or time to come, but fills all needs  
With present kindness. She would laugh  
and talk,

Take arms, suffer embraces, even walk  
The terrace 'neath the eyes of all her fate,  
And seem to heed what they might show or  
prate,

As if her whole heart's heart were in this  
house

And not at fearful odds and perilous.

And should one speak of Paris, as to say,

"Would that our lord might see thee go so  
gay

About his house!" Gently she'd bend her  
head

Down to her breast and pluck a vagrant  
thread

Forth from her tunic's hem, and looking  
wise,

Gaze at her hand which on her bosom's rise  
Lit like a butterfly and quivered there.

Now in the dusk, with Paris elsewhere  
At council with the chieftains, into the hall  
To Helen there, was come, adventuring all,

Odysseus in the garb of countryman,  
A herdsman from the hills, with stain of tan  
Upon his neck and arms, with staff and scrip,  
And round each leg bound, crosswise went a  
strip

Of good oxhide. Within the porch he came  
And louted low, and hailed her by her name,  
Among her maidens easy to be known,  
Though not so tall as most, and not full  
blown

To shape and flush like a full-hearted rose ;  
But like a summer wave her bosom flows  
Lax and most gentle, and her tired sweet face  
Seems pious as the moon in a blue space  
Of starless heaven, and in her eyes the hue  
Of early morning, gray through mist of blue.  
Not by a flaunted beauty is she guessed  
Queen of them all, but by the right expressed  
In her calm gaze and fearless, and that hold  
Upon her lips which Gods have. Nay, not  
cold,

Thou holy one, not cold thy lips, which say  
All in a sigh, and with one word betray  
The passion of thy heart ! But who can wis  
The fainting piercing message of thy kiss ?  
O blest initiate—let him live to tell  
Thy godhead, show himself thy miracle !

But when she saw him there with his head  
bowed  
And humble hands, deeply her fair face  
glowed,

And broad across the iris swam the black  
Until her eyes showed darkling. "Friend,  
your lack  
Tell me," she said, "and what is mine to  
give

Is yours ; but little my prerogative  
Here in this house, where I am not the  
queen,

You call me, but another name, I ween,  
Serves me about the country you are of,  
Which Ilios gives me, too, but not in love.  
Yet are we all alike, in evil plight,  
And should be tender of each other's right,  
And of each other's wrongdoing, and wrongs  
done

Upon us. Have you wife and little one  
Hungry at home ? Have you a son afield ?  
Or do you mourn ? Alas, I cannot wield  
The sword you lack, nor bow nor spear  
afford

To serve . . . "

He said, "Nay, you can sheathe the sword,  
Slack bowstring, and make spear a hunter's  
toy.

Lady, I come to end this war of Troy  
In your good pleasure."

With her steady eyes  
Unwinking fixt, "Let you and me devise,"  
Said she, "this happy end of bow and spear,  
So shall we serve the land. You have my  
ear ;



Speak then.'

"But so," he said, "these maidens have it  
But we save Troy alone, or never save it."

Turning she bid them leave her with a  
nod,

And they obeyed. Swift then and like a  
God

She seemed, with bright all-knowing eyes and  
calm.

Gesture of high-held head, and open palm  
To greet. "Laertes' son, what news bringst  
thou?"

"Lady," he said, "the best. The hour is  
now.

We stand within the heaven-establisht walls,  
We gird the seat. Within an hour it falls,  
The seat divine of Dardanos and Tros,  
After our ten years' travail and great loss  
Of heroes not yet rested, but to rest  
Soon."

Then she laid her hand upon her breast  
To stay it. "Who are ye that stand here-  
by?"

"Desperate men," he said, "prepared to  
die

If thou wilt have it so. Chief is there  
none

Beside the ships but Nestor. All are gone  
Forth in the Horse. Under thy covering  
hand

Thou holdest all Achaia. Here we stand,

Epeios, Pyrrhos, Antiklos, with these  
Cretan Idomeneus, Meriones,  
Aias the Lokrian, Teukros, Diomedes  
Of the loud war-cry, next thy man indeed,  
Golden-haired Melelaus the robbed King,  
And Agamemnon by him, and I who bring  
This news and must return to take what lot  
Thou chooseth us; for all is thine, God  
wot,

To end or mend, to make or mar 'at will."

A weighty utterance, but she heard the  
thrill

Within her heart, and listened only that—  
To know her love so near. So near he sat  
Hidden when she that toucht the Horse's  
flank •

Could have toucht him! "Odysseus!" her  
voice sank

To the low tone of the soft murmuring dove  
That nests and broods, "Odysseus, heard  
my love

My whisper of his name when close I stood  
And stroked the Horse?"

"I heard and understood,  
He said, "and Lokrian Aias would have  
spoken

Had I not clapt a hand to his mouth—else  
broken

By garish day had been' our house of dream,  
And our necks too. I heard a woman scream  
Near by and cry upon the Ruinous Face,

But none made answer to her."

Nought she says  
To that but "I am ready ; let my lord  
Come when he will. Humbly I wait his  
word."

"That word I bring," Odysseus said, "he  
comes.  
Await him here."

Her wide eyes were the homes  
Of long desire. "Ah, let me go with thee  
Even as I am ; from this dark house take  
me  
While Paris is abroad !"

He shook his head.  
"Not so, but he must find thee here abed—  
And Paris here."

The light died out ; a mask  
Of panic was her face, what time her task  
Stared on a field of white horror like blood :  
"Here ! But there must be strife then !"

"Well and good,"  
Said he.

Then she, shivering and looking small,  
"And one must fall?" she said ; he, "One  
must fall."

Reeling she turned her pincht face other  
way  
And muttered with her lips, grown cold and  
gray,  
Then fawning came at him, and with her  
hands

Besought him, but her voice made no demands,

Only her haunted eyes were quick, and prayed,  
“ Ah, not to fall through me ! ”

“ By thee,” he said,  
“ The deed is to be done.”

She droopt adown  
Her lovely head ; he heard her broken moan,  
“ Have I not caused enough of blood-  
shedding,

And enough women’s tears ? Is not the  
sting

Sharp enough of the knife within my side ? ”

No more she could.

Then he, “ Think not to avoid  
The lot of man, who payeth the full price  
For each deed done, and riddeth vice by  
vice :

Such is the curse upon him. The doom is  
By God decreed, that for thy forfeit bliss  
In Sparta thou shalt pay the price in Troy,  
Dishonour for lost honour, pain for joy ;  
By what hot thought impelled, by that alone  
Win back ; by violence violence atone.

If by chicane thou fleddest, by chicane  
Win back thy blotted footprints. Out again  
With all thine arts of kisses slow and long,  
Of smiles and stroking hands, and crooning  
song

Whenas full-fed with love thou lulledst  
asleep ;

Renew thine eyebright glances, whisper and  
creep

And twine about his neck thy wreathing  
arms :

As we with spears so 'do thou with thy  
charms,

Arm thee and wait the hour of fire and smoke  
To purge this robbery. Paris by the stroke  
Of him he robbed shall wash out his old  
cheat

In blood, and thou, woman, by new deceit  
Of him redeem thy first. For thus God  
saith,

Traitress, thou shalt betray thy thief to  
death."

He ceased, and she by misery made wild  
And witless, shook, and like a little child  
Gazed piteous, and asked, "What must I  
do?"

He answered, "Hold him by thee, falsely  
true,

Until the King stand armed within the house  
Ready to take his blood-price. Even thus,  
By shame alone shalt thou redeem thy  
shame."

And now she claspt his knee and cried his  
name :

"Mercy ! I cannot do it. Let me die  
Sooner than go to him so. What, must I lie  
With one and other, make myself a whore,  
And so go back to Sparta, nevermore

To hold my head up level with my slaves,  
Nor dare to touch my child ?”

Said he, “ Let knaves  
Deal knavishly till freedom they can win ;  
And so let sinners purge themselves of sin.”  
Then, fiercely looking on her where she  
croucht

Fast by his knees, his whole mind he avoucht :  
“ How many hast thou sent the way of death  
By thy hot fault ? What ghosts like wander-  
ing breath

Shudder and wail unhouseled on the plain,  
Shreds of Achaian honour ? What hearts in  
pain

Cry the night through ? What souls this  
very night

Fare forth ? Art thou alone to sup delight,  
Alone to lap in pleasantness, who first  
And only, with thy lecher and his thirst,  
Wrought all the harm ? Only for thy  
smooth sake

Did Paris reive, and Menelaus ache,  
And Hector die ashamed, and Peleus' son  
Stand to the arrow, and Aias Telamon  
Find madness and self-murder, for the crown  
Of all his travail ?” He eyed her up and  
down

Sternly, as measuring her worth in scorn.  
“ Not thus may traffic any woman born  
While men endure cold nights and burning  
days,

Hunger and wretchedness."

She stands, she says,  
 "Enough—I cannot answer. Tell me plain  
 What I must do."

"At dark," he said, "we gain  
 The Gates and open them. A trumpet's  
 blast

Will sound the entry of the host, Hold fast  
 Thy Paris then. We storm the citadel,  
 High Pergamos; that won, the horn will tell  
 The sack begun. But hold thou Paris bound  
 Fast in thine arms. Once more the horn  
 shall sound.

That third is doom for him. Release him  
 then."

All blank she gazed. "Unarmed to face  
 armed men?"

"Unarmed," he said, "to meet his judgment  
 day."

Now was thick silence broken; now no  
 way

For her to shift her task nor he his fate.  
 Keenly she heeds. "'Tis Paris at the gate!  
 What now? Whither away? Where wilt  
 thou hide?"

He lookt her in the face. "Here I abide  
 What he may do. Was it not truth I  
 spake

That all Hellas lay in thy hand? Now take  
 What counsel or what comfort may avail."

Paris stood in the door and cried her  
Hail.

“Hail to thee, Rose of the World!” then  
saw the man,

And knit his brows upon him, close to scan  
His features; but Odysseus had his hood  
Shadowing his face. Some time the Trojan  
stood

Judging, then said, “Thou seek’st? What  
seekest thou?”

“A debt is owed me. I seek payment  
now.”

So he was told; but he drew nearer yet.

“I would know more of thee and of thy  
debt,”

He said.

And then Odysseus, “This thy strife  
Hath ruined all my fields which are my life,  
Brought murrain on my beasts, cold ash to  
my hearth,

Emptiness to my croft. Hunger and dearth,  
Are these enough? Who pays me?”

Then Paris,

“I pay, but first will know what man it is  
I am to pay, and in what kind.” So said,  
Snatching the hood, he whipt it from his head  
And lookt and knew the Ithacan. “Now  
by Zeus,

Treachery here!” He swung his sword-  
arm loose

Forth of his cloak and set hand to his sword;



But Helen softly called him : " Hath my  
lord

No word of greeting for his bondwoman ? "

Straightway he went to her, and left the man,  
And took her in his arms, and held her close.  
And light of foot, Odysseus quit the house.

## ELEVENTH STAVE

### THE BEGUILING OF PARIS

Now Paris' tipt her' chin and turned her  
face

Upwards to his that fondly he might trace  
The beauty of her budded lips, and stoop  
And kiss them softly; and fingered in the  
loop

That held her girdle, and closer pressed, on  
fire,

Towards her; for her words had stung desire  
Anew; and wooing in his fond boy's way,  
Whispered and lookt his passion; then to  
pray

Began: "Ah, love, long strange to me,  
behold

Thy winter past, and come the days of gold  
And pleasance of the spring! For in thine  
eyes

I see his light and hail him as he flies!  
Nay, cloud him not, nor veil him"—for she  
made

To turn her face, saying, "Ah, let them  
fade :

The soul thou prisonest here is grayer far."

But he would give no quarter now. "O  
star,

O beacon-star, shine on me in the night  
That I may wash me in thy bath of light,  
Taking my fill of thee ; so cleansed all  
And healed, I rise renewed to front what call  
May be ! " which said, with conquest in his  
bones

And in his eyes assurance, in high tones  
He called her maids, bade take her and  
prepare

The couch, and her to be new-wedded there ;  
For long had they been strangers to their  
bliss.

"So by the altar standeth she submiss  
And watchful, praying silent and intense  
To a strange-figured Goddess, to his sense  
Who knew but Aphrodité. " Love, what  
now ?

"Who is thy God ? What secret rite hast  
thou ? "

For grave and stern above that altar stood  
Here the Queen of Heaven.

In dry mood  
She answered him, "Chaste wives to her do  
pray

Before they couch, Blest be the strife ! You  
say

We are to be new-wedded. Pour with me  
Libation that we love not fruitlessly."

So said, she took the well-filled cup and  
poured,  
And prayed, saying, "O Mother, not  
abhorred

Be this my service of thee. Count it not  
Offence, nor let my prayers be forgot  
When reckoning comes of things done and  
not done

By me thy child, or to me, hapless one,  
Unloving paramour and unloved wife!"

"Here, to thee for issue of the strife!"  
Cried Paris then, and poured. So Helen  
went

And let her maids adorn her to his bent.

Then took he joy of her, and little guessed  
Or cared what she might give or get. Possess  
Her body by his body, but her mind  
Searcht terribly the issue. As one blind  
Explores the dark about him in broad day  
And fingers in the air, so as she lay  
Lax in his arms, her fainting eyes, aglaze  
For terror coming, sought escape all ways.  
Alas for her! What way for woman fair,  
Whose joy no fairer makes her than despair?  
Her burning lips that kisses could not cool,  
Her beating heart that not love made so full,  
The surging of her breast, her clinging hands:  
Here are such signs as lover understands,

But fated Paris nowise. Her soul, distraught  
To save him, proved the net where he was  
caught.

For more she anguisht lest love be his bane  
The fiercelier spurred she him, to make him  
fain

Of that which had been ruinous to all.

But all the household gathered on the wall  
While these two in discordant bed were  
plight,

And watcht the Achaian fires. No beacon-  
light

Showed by the shore, but countless, flickering,  
streamed

Innumerable lights, wove, dipt and gleamed  
Like fireflies on a night of summer heat,  
Withal one way they moved, though many  
beat

Across and back, and mingled with the rest.

Anon a great glare kindled from the crest  
Of Ida, and was answered by a blaze

Behind the ships, which threw up in red haze  
• Huge forms of prow and beak. Then from  
the Mound

Of Ilos fire shot up, from sacred ground,

And out the mazy glory of moving lights

One sped and flared, as of the meteorites

In autumn some fly further, brighter courses.

A chariot! They heard the thunder of the  
horses ;

And as they flew the torch left a bright wake.

And thus to one another woman spake,  
"Lo, more lights race! They follow him,  
they near,  
Catch and draw level. Hark! Now you  
can hear  
The tramp of men!"

Says one, "That baleful sheen  
Is light upon their spears. The Greeks, I  
ween,  
Are coming up to rescue or requite."

But then her mate: "They mass, they fill  
the night  
With panic terror."

True, that all night things  
Fled as they came. They heard the flickering  
wings

Of countless birds in haste, and as they flew,  
So fled the dark away. Light waxed and  
grew

Until the dead of night was vivified  
And radiant opened out the countryside  
With pulsing flames of fire, which gleamed  
and glanced,

Flickered, wavered, yet never stayed advance.  
As the sun rising high o'er Ida cold  
Beats a sea-path in flakes of molten gold,  
So stretcht from shore to Troy that litten  
stream

That moved and shuddered, restless as a  
dream,

Yet ever nearing, till on spear and shield

They saw light like the moon on a drowned  
field,

And in the glare of torches saw and read  
Gray faces, like the legions of the dead,  
Silent about the walls, and waiting there.

But in the fragrant chamber Helen the fair  
Lay close in arms, and Paris slept, his head  
Upon her bosom, deep as any dead.

Sudden there smote the blast of a great  
horn,  
Single, long-held and shuddering, and far-  
borne ;

And then a deathless silence. Paris stirred  
On that soft pillow, and listened while they  
heard

Many men running frantically, with feet  
That slapt the stones, and voices in the  
street

Of question and call—"Oh, who are ye that  
run ?

What of the night?" "O peace!" And  
some lost one

Wailed like a woman, and her a man did  
curse,

And there were scuffling, prayers, and then  
worse—

A silence. But the running ended not  
While Paris lay alistening with a knot  
Of Helen's loose hair twisting round his  
finger.

"O love," he murmured 'low, "I may not linger.

The street's awake. Alas, thou art too kind  
To be a warrior's bride." Sighing, she  
twined

Her arm about his neck and toucht his face,  
And pressed it gently back to its warm place  
Of pillowing. And Paris kissed her breast  
And slept; but her heart's riot gave no rest  
As quaking there she lay, awaiting doom.

Then afar off rose clamour, and the room  
Was fanned with sudden light and sudden  
dark,

As on a summer night in a great park  
Blazed forth you see each tuft of grass or  
mound,

Anon the drowning blackness, while the sound  
Of Zeus's thunder hardens every close :

So here the chamber glared, then dipt, and  
rose

That far confused tumult, and now and then  
The scurrying feet of passion-driven men.

Thrilling she waited with sick certainty  
Of doom inexorable, while the struck city  
Fought its death-grapple, and the windy  
height

Of Pergamos became a shambles. White  
The holy shrines stared on a field of blood,  
And with blank eyes the emptied temples  
stood

While murder raved before them, and below



And all about the 'city ran the woe  
Of women for their children. 'Then the  
flame

Burst in the citadel, and overcame  
The darkness, and the time seemed of broad  
day.

And Helen stared unwinking where she lay  
Pillowing Paris.

Now glad and long and shrill  
The second trumpet sounds. They have the  
hill—

High 'Troy is down, is down! Starting, he  
wakes

And turns him in her arms. His face she  
takes

In her two hands and turns it up to hers.  
Nothing she says, nothing she does, nor stirs  
From her still scrutiny, nor so much as blinks  
Her eyes, deep-searching, of whose blue he  
drinks,

And fond believes her all his own, while she  
Marvels that aught of his she e'er could be  
In times bygone. But now he is on fire  
Again, and urges on her his desire,  
And loses all the sense of present needs  
For him in burning Troy, where Priam bleeds  
Head-smitten, trodden on his palace-floor,  
And white Cassandra yieldeth up her flower  
To Aias' lust, and of the Dardan race  
Survive he only, renegade disgrace,  
He only and Aineias the wise prince.

But now is crying fear abroad and wins  
The very household of the shameful lover ;  
Now are the streets alive, for worse in cover  
Like a trapt rat to die than fight the odds  
Under the sky. Now women shriek to the  
Gods,

And men run witlessly, and in and out  
The Greeks press, burning, slaying, and the  
rout

Screameth to Heaven. As at sea the mews  
Pack, their wings battling, when some fresh  
wrack strews

The tideway, and in greater haste to stop  
Others from prey, will let their morsel drop,  
And all the while make harsh lament—so here  
The avid spoilers bickered in their fear

To be manœuvred out of robbery,  
And tore the spoil, and mangled shamefully  
Bodies of men to strip them, and in haste  
To forestall ravishers left the victims chaste.

Ares, the yelling God, and Até white  
Swept like a snow-storm over Troy that night ;  
And towers rockt, and in the naked glare  
Of fire the smoke climbed to the upper air ;  
And clamour was as of the dead broke loose.

But Menelaus his stern way pursues,  
And to the wicked house with chosen band  
Cometh, his good sword naked in his hand ;  
And now, while Paris loves and holds her fast  
In arms, the third horn sounds a shattering  
blast,

Long-held, triumphant ; and about the door  
Gathers the household, to cry, to pray, to  
    implore,  
And at the last break in and scream the  
    truth—

“The Greeks! The Greeks! Save yourselves!”

    Then in sooth  
Starts Paris out of bed, and as he goes  
Sees in the eyes of Helen all she knows  
And all believes ; and with his utter loss  
Of her rises the man in him that was  
Ere luxury had entered blood and bone  
Of him. No word he said, but let one groan,  
And turned his dying eyes to hers, and read  
Therein his fate, that to her he was dead,  
Long dead and cold in grave. Whereat he  
    past  
Out of the door, and met his end at last  
As man, not minion.

    But the woman fair  
Lay on her face, half buried in her hair,  
Naked and prone beneath her saving sin,  
Not yet enheartened new life to begin.

## ENVOY

BUT thou didst rise, Maid Helen, as from  
sleep,  
A final tryst to keep  
With thy true lover, in whose hands thy life  
Lay, as in arms ; his wife  
In heart as well as deed ; his wife, his friend,  
His soul's fount and its end !  
For such it is, the marriage of true minds,  
Each in each sanction finds ;  
So if her beauty lift her out of thought  
Whither man's to be brought  
To worship her perfection on his knees,  
So in his strength she sees  
Self glorified, and two make one clear orb  
Whereinto all rays absorb  
Which stream from God and unto God  
return.—  
So, as he fared, I yearn  
To be, and serve my years of pain and loss —  
'Neath my walled Ilios,  
With my eyes ever fixt to where, a star,  
Thou and thy sisters are,  
Helen and Beatrice, with thee embraced,  
Hands in thy hands, and arms about thy  
waist.



## HYPPIPYLE

QUEEN of the shadows, Maid and Wife,  
Twifold in essence, as in life,  
The lamp of Death, the star of Birth,  
Half cradled and half mourned by Earth,  
By Hell half won, half lost ! aid me  
To sing thy fond Hypsipyle,  
Thy bosom's mate who, unafraid,  
Renounced for thee what part she had  
In sun and wind upon the hill,  
In dawn about the mere, in still  
Woodlands, in kiss of lapping wave,  
In laughter, in love—all this she gave !—  
And shared thy dream-life, visited  
The sunless country of the dead,  
There to abide with thee, their Queen,  
In that gray region, shadow-seen  
By them that cast no shadows, yet  
Themselves are shadows. Nor forget,  
Koré, her love made manifest  
To thee, familiar of her breast  
And partner of her whispering mouth.

Thee too, Our Lady of the South,  
 Uranian Kypris, I invoke,  
 Regent of starry space, with stroke  
 Of splendid wing, in whose white wake  
 Stream those who, filled with thee, forsake  
 Their clinging shroudy clots, and rise,  
 Lover and loved, to thy pure skies,  
 To thy blue realm ! O lady, touch  
 My lips with rue, for she loved much.

What poet in what cloistered nook,  
 Indenting in what roll of a book  
 His rhymes, can voice the tides of love ?  
 Nay, thrilling lark, nay, moaning dove,  
 The nightingale's full-charged throat  
 That cheereth now, and now doth gloat,  
 And now recordeth bitter-sweet  
 Longing, too wise to image it :  
 These be your minstrels, lovers ! Choose  
 From their winged choir your urgent Muse ;  
 Let her your speechless joys relate  
 Which men with words sophisticate,  
 Striving by reasons make appear  
 To head what heart proclaims so clear  
 To heart ; as if by wit to wis  
 What mouth to mouth tells in a kiss,  
 Or in their syllogisms dry  
 Freeze a swift glance's cogency.  
 Nay, but the heart's so music-fraught,  
 Music is all in love, words naught.  
 One heart's a rote, with music stored

Though mute ; but two hearts make a chord  
Of piercing music. One alone  
Is nothing : two make the full tone.

## I

On Enna's uplands, on a lea  
Between the mountains and the sea,  
Shadowed anon by wandering cloud,  
Or flickering wings of birds a-crowd,  
And now all golden in the sun, •  
See Koré, see her maidens run  
Hither and thither through those hours  
Of dawn among the wide-eyed flowers,  
While gentian, crocus, asphodel  
(With rosy star in each white bell),  
Anemone, blood-red with rings  
Of paler fire, that plant that swings •  
A crimson cluster in the wind  
They pluck, or sit anon to bind  
Of these earth-stars a coronet  
For their smooth-tressed Queen, who yet  
Strays with her darling interlaced,  
Hypsipyle the grave, the chaste—  
Her whose gray shadow-life with his  
Who singeth now for ever is.

She, little slim thing, Koré's mate,  
Child-faced, gray-eyed, of sober gait,  
Of burning mind and passion pent  
To image-making, ever went  
Where wonned her Mistress ; for those two



By their hearts' gráce together grew,  
 The one to need, the one to give  
 (As women must if they would live,  
 Who substance win by waste of self  
 And only spend to hoard their pelf :  
 " O heart, take all of mine !" " O heart,  
 That which thou tak'st of thee is part—  
 No robbery therefore : mine is thine,  
 Take then ! ") : so she and Proserpine  
 Intercommunion'd each bright day,  
 And when night fell together lay  
 Cradled in arms, or cheek to cheek  
 Whispered the darkness out. Thou meek  
 And gentle vision ! let me tell  
 Thy beauties o'er I love so well :  
 Thy sweet low bosom's rise and fall,  
 Pulsing thy heart's clear madrigal ;  
 Or how the blue beam from thine eyes  
 Imageth all love's urgencies ;  
 Thy lips' frail fragrance, as of flowers  
 Remembered in penurious hours  
 Of winter-exile ; of thy brow,  
 Not written as thy breast of snow  
 With love's faint charact'ry, for his wing  
 Leaves not the heart long ! Last I sing  
 Thy thin quick fingers, in whose pleaching  
 Lieth all healing, all good teaching—  
 Wherewith, touching my discontent,  
 I know how thou art eloquent !

Remember'd joy, Hypsipyle !  
 Now may that serve to comfort me,

While I, O Maiden dedicate,  
Seek voice for singing thy gray Fate !

Now, as they went, one heart in two,  
Brusht to the knèes by flowers, by dew  
Anointed, by the wind caressed,  
By the light kissed on eyes and breast,  
'Twas Koré talkèd ; Hypsipyle  
Listened, with eyes far-set, for she  
Of speech was frugal, voicing low '  
And rare her heart's deep underflow—  
Content to lie, like fallow sweet  
For rain or sun to cherish it,  
Or scattered seed substance to find  
In her deep-funded, quiet mind.  
And thus the Goddess : " Blest art thou,  
Hypsipyle, who canst not know  
Until the hour strikes what must come  
To pass ! But I foresee the doom  
And stay to meet it. Even here  
The place, and now the hour ! " Then fear  
Took her who spake so fearless, cold  
Threaded her thronging veins—behold !  
A hand on either shoulder stirs  
That slim, sweet body close to hers,  
And need fires need till, lip with lip,  
They seal and sign their fellowship,  
While Koré, godhead all forgot,  
Clings whispering, " Child, leave me not  
Whenas to darkness and the dead  
I go ! " And clear the answer sped

From warm mouth, murmuring kiss and cheer,  
 "Never I leave thee, O my dear!"  
 Thereafter stand they beatingly,  
 Not speaking; and the hour draws nigh.

And all the land shows passing fair,  
 Fair the broad sea, the living air,  
 The misty mountain-sides, the lake  
 Flecked blue and purple! To forsake  
 These, and those bright flower-gatherers  
 Scattered about this land of theirs,  
 That stoop or run, that kneel to pick,  
 That cry each other to come quick  
 And see new treasure, unseen yet!  
 Remembered joy—ah, how forget!

But mark how all must come to pass  
 As was foreknowned. In the grass  
 Whereas the Goddess and her mate  
 Stood, one and other, prompt for fate—  
 Listless the first and heavy-eyed,  
 Astrain the second—she espied  
 That strange white flower, unseen before,  
 With chalice pale, which thin stalk bore  
 And swung, as hanging by a hair,  
 So fine it seemed afloat in air,  
 Unlinkt and wafted for the feast  
 Of some blest mystic, without priest  
 Or acolyte to tender it:  
 Whereto the maid did stoop and fit  
 Her hand about its silken cup

To close it, that her mouth might sup  
The honey-drop within. The bloom  
Saw Koré then, and knew her doom  
Foretold in it ; and stood in trance  
Fixed and still. No nigromance  
Used she, but read the fate it bore  
In seedless womb and petals froze.  
Chill blew the wind, waiting stood She,  
Waiting her mate, Hypsipyle.

Then in clear sky the thunder tolled  
Sudden, and all the mountains rolled  
The dreadful summons round, and still  
Lay all the lands, only the rill  
Made tinkling music. Once more drave  
Peal upon peal—and lo ! a grave  
Yawned in the Earth, and gushing smoke  
Belched out, as driven, and hung, and broke  
With sullen puff ; like tongues the flame  
Leapt following. Thence AIdoneus came,  
Swart-bearded king, with iron crown'd,  
In iron mailed, his chariot bound  
About with iron, holding back  
Amain two steeds of glistening black  
And eyeballs white-rimmed fearfully,  
And nostrils red, and crests flying free ;  
Who held them pawing at the verge,  
Tossing their spume up, as the surge  
Flung high against some seaward bluff.  
Nothing he spake, or smooth or gruff,  
But drave his errand, gazing down

Upon the Maid, whose blown back gown  
Revealed her maiden. Still and proud  
Stood she among her nymphs, unbowed  
Her comely head, undimmed her eye,  
Inseparate her lips and dry,  
Facing his challenge of her state,  
Neither denying, nor desperate,  
Pleading no mercy, seeing none,  
Her wild heart masked in face of stone.  
But they, her bevy, clustered thick  
As huddled sheep, set their eyes quick,  
And held each other, hand or waist,  
Paling or flushing as fear raced  
Thronging their veins — they knew not  
they,  
The gathered fates that broke this day,

And all the land seemed passing fair  
To one who knew, and waited there.

“Goddess and Maid,” then said the King,  
“Long have I sought this day should bring  
An end of torment. Know me thou  
God postulant, with whom below  
A world awaits her queen, while here  
I seek and find one without peer;  
Nor deem her heedless nor unschooled  
In what in Heaven is writ and ruled.  
Decreed of old my bride-right was,  
Decreed thy Mother’s pain and loss,  
Decreed thy loathing, and decreed

That which thou shunnest to be thy need ;  
For thou shalt love me, Lady, yet,  
Though little liking now, and fret  
Of jealous care shall grave thy heart  
And draw thee back when time's to part—  
If fond Demeter have her will  
Against thine own."

The Maid stood still

And guarded watched, and her proud eyes'  
Scrutiny bade his own advise  
Whether indeed their solemn stare  
Saw Destiny and read it there  
Beyond her suitor, or within  
Her own heart heard the message ring.  
Awhile she gazed : her stern aspect,  
Young and yet fraught with Godhead, checkt,  
Both Him who claimed, and her who'd cling,  
And them who wondered. "O great King,"  
She said, and mournful was her crying  
As when night-winds set pine-trees sighing,  
"King of the folk beyond the tide  
Of sleep, behold thy chosen bride  
Not shunning thee, nor seeking. Take  
That which Gods neither mar nor make,  
But only They, the Three, who spin  
The threads which hem and mesh us in,  
Both Gods and men, till she who peers  
The longest cuts them with her shears.  
Take, take, Aidoneus, and take her,  
My fosterling."

Then He, "O star.  
 Of Earth, O Beacon of my days, ^  
 Light of my nights, whose beamy rays  
 Shall pierce the foggy cerement  
 Wherein my dead grope and lament  
 Beyond all loss the loss of light,  
 Come! and be pleasant in my sight  
 This thy beloved. Perchance she too  
 Shall find a suitor come to woo ; ^  
 For love men leave not with their bones—  
 That is the soul's, and half atones  
 And half makes bitterer their loss,  
 Remembering what their fortune was."

Trembling Hypsipyle uplift  
 Her eyes towards the hills, where swift  
 The shadows flew, but no more fleet  
 Than often she with flying feet  
 And flying raiment, she with these  
 Her mates, whom now estranged she sees—  
 As if the shadow-world had spread  
 About her now, and she was dead—  
 Her mates no more ! cut off by fear  
 From these two fearless ones. A tear  
 Welled up and hovered, hung a gem  
 Upon her eyelid's dusky hem,  
 As raindrops linkt and strung arow  
 Broider with stars the winter bough.  
 This was her requiem and farewell  
 To them, thus rang<sup>d</sup> she her own knell ;  
 Nor more gave she, nor more asked they,  
 But took and went the fairy way.

For thus with unshed tears made blind  
Went she & thus go the fairy kind  
Whither fate driveth ; not as we  
Who fight with it, and deem us free  
Therefore, and after pine, or strain  
Against our prison bars in vain.  
For to them Fate, is Lord of Life  
And Death, and idle is a strife  
With such a master. They not know  
Life past, life coming, but life now ;  
Nor back look they to long, nor forth  
To hope, but sup the minute's worth  
With draught so quick and keen that each  
Moment gives more than we could reach  
In all our term of three-score years,  
Whereof full score we give to fears  
Of losing them, and other score  
Dreaming how fill the twenty more.

Now is the hour, Bride of the Night !  
The chariot turns, the great steeds fight  
The rocky entry ; flies the dust  
Behind the wheels at each fierce thrust  
Of giant shoulder, at each lunge  
Of giant haunch. Down, down they plunge  
Into the dark, with rioting mane,  
And the earth's door shuts to again.  
Now fly, ye Oreads, strain your arms,  
Let eyes and hair voice your alarms—  
Hair blown back, mouths astretch for fear,  
Strained eyeballs—cry that Mother dear  
Her daughter's rape ; fly like the gale



That down the vāleys drives the nail  
In scurrying sheets, and lays the corn  
Flat, which when man of wōman born  
Seeth, he bows him to the grass,  
Whispering in hush, *The Oreads pass.*  
(In shock he knows ye, and in mirth,  
Since he is kindred of that earth  
Which bore ye in her secret stress,  
Images of her loveliness,  
To her dear paramour the Wind.)  
Follow me now that car behind.

## II

O ye that know the fairy throng,  
And heed their secret under-song ;  
In flower or leaf's still ecstasy  
Of birth and bud their passion see,  
In wind or calm, in driving rain  
Or frozen snow discern them strain  
To utter and to be ; who lie  
At dawn in dewy brakes to spy  
The rapture of their flying feet—  
Follow me now those coursers fleet,  
Sucked in their wake, down ruining  
Through channelled night, where only sing  
The shrill gusts streaming through the hair  
Of them who sway and bend them there,  
And peer in vain with shielded eyes  
To rend the dark. Clinging it lies,  
Thick as wet gossamer that shrouds

October brushwoods, or low clouds  
That from the mountain tops roll down  
Into the lowland vales, to drown  
Men's voices and to choke their breath  
And make a silence like to death.  
But this was hot and dry ; it came  
And smote them, like the gush of flame  
Fanned in a smithy, that outpours  
And floods with fire the open doors.

Downward their course was, swift as flight  
Of meteor flaring through the night,  
Steady and dreadful, with no sound  
Of wheels or hoofs upon the ground,  
Nor jolt, nor jar ; for once past through  
Earth's portals, steeds and chariot flew  
On wings invisible and strong  
And even-oaring, such as throng  
The nights when birds of passage sweep  
O'er cities and the folk asleep :  
• Such was their awful flight. Afar  
Showed Hades glimmering like a star  
Seen red through fog : and as they sped  
To that, the frontiers of the dead  
Revealed their sullen leagues and bare,  
And sad forms flitting here and there,  
Or clustered, waiting who might come  
Their empty ways with news of home.  
Yet all one course at length must hold,  
Or late or soon, and all be tolled  
By Charon in his dark-prowed boat.  
Thither was swept the chariot

And crossed dry-wheeled the coiling flood  
Of Styx, and o'er the willow wood,  
And slim gray poplars which do hem  
The further shore, Hell's diadem—  
So by the tower foursquare and great  
Where King AIdoneus keeps his state  
And rules his bodyless thralls they stand.

Dark ridge and hollow showed the land  
Fold over fold, like waves of soot  
Fixt in an anguish of pursuit  
For evermore, so far as eye  
Could range ; and all was hot and dry  
As furnace is which all about  
Etna scorcheth in days of drouth,  
And showeth dun and sinister  
That fair isle linked to main so fair.  
Nor tree nor herbage grew, nor sang  
Water among the rocks : hard rang  
The heel on metal, or on crust  
Grew tender, or went soft in dust ;  
Neither for beast nor bird nor snake  
Was harbourage ; nor could such slake  
Their thirst, nor from the bitter heat  
Hide, since the sun not furnished it ;  
But airless, shadowless and dense  
The land lay swooning, dead to sense  
Beneath that vault of stuprous black,  
Motionless hanging, without wrack  
Of cloud to break and pass, nor rent  
To hint the blue. Like the foul tent

A foul night makes, it sagged ; for stars  
Showed hopeless faces, with two scars  
In each, their eyes' immortal woe,  
Ever to seek and never know :  
In all that still immensity  
These only moved—these and the sea,  
Which dun and sullen heaved, with surge  
And swell unseen, save at the verge  
Where fainted off the black to gray  
And showed such light as on a day  
Of sun's eclipse men tremble at.

Here the dead people moved or sat,  
Casting no shadow, hailing none  
Boldly ; but in fierce undertone  
They plied each other, or on-spied  
Their way with signal of the head  
For answer, or arms desperate  
Flung up, or shrug disconsolate.  
• And this the quest of every one :  
“ What hope have ye ? ” And answer,  
“ None.”

Never passed shadow shadow but  
That answer got to question put.  
In that they lived, in that, alas !  
Lovely and hapless, Thou must pass  
Thy days, with this for added lot—  
Aching, to nurse things unforgot.

Remember'd joy, Hypsipyle !  
The Oread choir, the Oread glee :

The nimble air of quickening hills,  
The sweet dawn light that floods and fills  
The hollowed valleys ; the dawn wind  
That bids the world wake, and on blind  
Eyelids of sleeping mortals lays  
Cool palms that urge them see and praise  
The Day-God coming with the sun,  
To hearten toil ! He warned you run  
And hide your beauties deep in brake  
Of fern or briar, or reed of lake,  
Or in wet crevice of the rock,  
There to abide until the clock  
You reckon by, with shadowy hands,  
Lay benediction on the lands  
And landsmen, and the eve-jar's croak  
Summon ye, lightfoot fairy folk,  
To your activity full tide  
Over the empty earth and wide.  
Here be your food, fair nymph, and coy  
Of mortal ken—remember'd joy !

Remember'd joy ! Ah, stormy nights,  
Ah, the mad revel when wind fights  
With wind, and slantwise comes the rain  
And shatters at the window-pane,  
To wake the hind, who little knows  
Whose fingers drum those passionate blows,  
Nor what swift indwellers of air  
Ye be who hide in forms so fair  
Your wayward motions, cruel to us,  
While lovely, and despiteous !

Ah, nights of flying scud and rout  
When scared the slim young moon rides out  
In her lagoon of open sky,  
Or older, marks your revelry  
As calm and large she oars above  
Your drifting lives of ruth or love.  
Boon were those nights of dusted gold  
And glint of fireflies! Boon the cold  
And witching frost! All's one, all's one  
To thee, whose nights and days go on  
Now in one span of changeless dusk  
On one earth, crackling like the husk  
Of the dropt mast in winter wood:  
Remember'd joy—'tis all thy food,  
Hypsipyle, to whose fond sprite  
I vow my praise while I have light.

Dumbly she wandered there, as pale  
With lack of light, with form as frail  
•As those poor hollow congeners  
Whose searching eyes encountered hers,  
Petitioning as mute as she  
Some grain of hope, where none might be,  
Daring not yet to voice their moan  
To her whose case was not their own;  
For where they go like breath in a shell  
That wails, my love goes quick in Hell.

Alas, for her, the sweet and slim!  
Slowly she pines; her eyes grow dim  
With seeking; her smooth, sudden breasts

Hang languidly ; those little nests  
For kisses which her dimples were,  
In cheeks graved hollow now by care  
Vanish, and sharply thrusts her chin,  
And sharp her bones of arm and shin.  
Reproach she looks, about, above,  
Denied her light, denied her love,  
Denied for what she sacrificed,  
Doomed to be fruitless agonist.

(O God, and I must see her fade,  
Must see and anguish—in my shade!)

Nor help nor comfort gat she now  
From her whose need called forth her vow ;  
For close in arms Queen Koré dwelt  
In that great tower Aïdoneus built  
To cherish her ; deep in his bed,  
Loyed as the Gods love whom they wed ;  
Turned from pale maiden to pale wife,  
Pale now with love's insatiate strife  
First to appease, and then renew  
The wild desire to mingle two  
Natures, to long, to seek, to shun,  
To have, to give, to make two one  
That must be two if they would each  
Learn all the lore that love can teach.  
So strove the mistress, while the maid  
Went alien among the dead,  
Unspoken, speaking none, but watcht  
By them who knew themselves outmatcht  
By her, translated whole, nor guessed  
What miseries gnawed within that breast,

Which could be toucht, which could give  
meat,

To babe ; which was not eye-deceit  
As theirs, poor phantoms. So went she  
Grudged but unscathed beside the sea,  
Or sat alone by that sad strand  
Nursing her worn cheek in her hand ;  
And did not mark, as day on day  
Lengthened the arch of changeless gray,  
How she was shadowed, how to her  
Stretcht arms another prisoner ;,  
Nor knew herself desirable  
By any thankless guest of Hell—  
Withal each phantom seemed no less  
Whole-natured to her heedlessness.

Midway her round of solitude  
She used to haunt a dead sea-wood  
Where among boulders lifeless trees  
Stuck rigid fingers to the breeze—  
That stream of faint hot air that flits  
Aimless at noon. 'Tis there she sits  
Hour after hour, and as a dove  
Croons when her breast is ripe for love,  
So sings this exile, quiet, sad chants  
Of love, yet knows not what she wants ;  
And singing there in undertone,  
Is one day answered by the moan  
Of hidden mourner ; but no fear  
Hath she for sound so true, though near ;  
Nay, but sings out her elegy,



Which, like an echo, answers he.  
Again she sings ; he suits her mood,  
Nor breaks upon her solitude :  
So she, choragus, calls the tune,  
And as she leads he follows soon.  
As bird with bird vies in the brake,  
She sings no note he will not take—  
As when she pleads, “ Ah, my lost love,  
The night is dark thou art not of,”  
Quick cometh answering the phrase,  
“ O love, let all our nights be days ! ”  
This, rapt, with beating heart, she heeds  
And follows, “ Sweet love, my heart bleeds !  
Come, stay the wound thyself didst give ” ;  
Then he, “ I come to bid thee live.”  
And so they carol, and her heart  
Swells to believe his counterpart,  
And strophé striketh clear, which he  
Caps with his brave antistrophe ;  
And as a maiden waxes bold,  
And opens what should not be told  
When all her auditory she sees  
Within her mirror, so to trees  
And rocks, and sullen sounding main  
She empties all her passioned pain ;  
And “ love, love, love,” her burden is,  
And “ I am starving for thee,” his.  
Moved, melted, all on fire she stands,  
Holding abroad her quivering hands,  
Raises her sweet eyes faint with tears  
And dares to seek him whom she hears ;

And from her parted lips a sigh  
 Stealeth, as knowing he is nigh  
 And her fate on her—then she'd shun  
 That which she seeks ; but the thing's done.

Hollow-voiced, dim, spake her a shade,  
 "O thou that comest, nymph or maid—  
 If nymph, then maiden, since for aye  
 Virgin is immortality,  
 Nor love can change what Death cannot—  
 Look on me by love new-begot ;  
 Look on me, child new-born, nor start  
 To see my form who knowest my heart ;  
 For it is thine. O Mother and Wife,  
 Take then my love—thou gavest it life !"

So spake one close : to whom she lent  
 The wonder of her eyes' content—  
 That lucent gray, as if moonlight  
 Shone through a sapphire in the night—  
 And saw him faintly imaged, rare  
 As wisp of cloud on hillside bare,  
 A filamental form, a wraith  
 Shaped like that man who in the faith  
 Of one puts all his hope : who stood  
 Trembling in her near neighbourhood,  
 A thing of haunted eyes, of slim  
 And youthful seeming ; yet not dim,  
 Yet not unmanly in his fashion  
 Of speech, nor impotent of passion—

The which his tones gave earnest of  
And his aspect of hopeless love ;  
Who, drawing nearer, came to stand  
So close beside her that one hand  
Lit on her shoulder—yet no touch  
She felt : “ O maiden overmuch,”  
He grieved, “ O body far too sweet,  
For such as I, frail counterfeit  
Of man, who yet was once a man,  
Cut off before the midmost span  
Of mortal life was but half run,  
Or ere to love he had found one  
Like thee—yet happy in that fate,  
That waiting, he is fortunate :  
For better far in Hell to fare  
With thee than commerce elsewhere,  
Sharing the snug and fat outlook  
Of bed and board and ingle-nook  
With earth-bound woman, earth-born child.  
Nay, but high love is free and wild  
And centreth not in mortal things ;  
But to the soul giveth he wings,  
And with the soul strikes partnership,  
So may two let corruption slip  
And breasting level, with far eyes  
Lifted, seek haven in the skies,  
Untrammel'd by the earthly mesh.  
O thou,” said he, “ of fairy flesh,  
Immortal prisoner, take of me  
Love ! 'tis my heritage in fee ;  
For I am very part thereof;

And sharpe the godhead."

So his love  
Pled he with tones in love well-skilled  
Which on her bosom beat and thrilled,  
And pierced. No word nor look she had  
To voice her heart, or sad or glad.  
Rapt stood she, wooed by eager word  
And by her need, whose cry she heard  
Above his crying ; but she guessed  
She was desired, beset, possessed  
Already, handfasted to sight,  
And yielding so, her heart she plight.

Thus was her mating : of the eyes  
And ears, and her love half surmise,  
Detected by her burning face  
Which saw, not felt, his fierce embrace.  
For on her own she knew no hand .  
When caging it he seemed to stand,  
And round her waist felt not the warm  
Sheltered peace of the belting arm  
She saw him clasp withal. When rained  
His words upon her, or eyes strained  
As though her inmost shrine to pierce  
Where hid her heart of hearts, her ears  
Conceived, although her body sweet  
Might never feel a young life beat  
And leap within it. Ah, what cry  
That mistress e'er heard poet sigh  
Could voice thy beauty ? Or what chant  
Of music be thy ministrant ?

Since thou art Music, poesy  
Must both thy spouse and increase be !

In the hot dust, where lizards crouch  
And pant, he made her bridal couch ;  
Thither down drew her to his side  
And, phantom, taught her to be bride  
With words so ardent, looks so hot  
She needs must feel what she had not,  
Guess herself in beleaguered bed  
And throb response. Thus she was wed.  
As she whom Zeus loved in a cloud,  
So lay she in her lover's shroud,  
And o'er her members crept the chill  
We know when mist creeps up a hill  
Out of the vale at eve. As grows  
The ivy, rooting as it goes,  
In such a quick close envelope  
She lay asworn, nor guessed the scope  
Nor tether of his hot intent,  
Nor what to that inert she lent,  
Save when at last with half-turned head  
And glimmering eyes, encompassed  
She saw herself, a bride possest  
By ghostly bridegroom, held and prest  
To unfelt bosom, saw his mouth  
Against her own, which to his drouth  
Gave no allay that she could sense,  
Nor took of her sweet recompense.  
So moved by pity, stirred by rue,  
Out of their onslaught young love grew.

Love that with delicate tongues of fire  
Can kindle hearts inflamed desire  
In her for him who needed it ;  
And so she claimed and by eyes' wit  
Had what she would : and now made war,  
Being, as all sweet women are,  
Prudes till Love calls them, and then fierce  
In love's high calling. Thus with her ears  
She fed on love, and to her eyes  
Lent deeds of passionate emprise—  
Till at the last, the shadowy strife  
Ended, she owned herself all wife.

High mating of the mind ! O love,  
Since this must be, on this she throve !  
Remember'd joy, Hypsipyle,  
Since this must be, O love, let be !



## OREITHYIA

OREITHYIA, by the North Wind carried  
To stormy Thrace from Athens where you  
tarried

Down by Ilissus all a blowy day  
Among the asphodels, how rapt away  
Thither, and in what frozen bed wert  
married?

“I was a King's tall daughter still unwed,  
Slim and desirable my locks to shed  
Free from the fillet. He my maiden belt  
Undid with busy fingers hid but felt,  
And made me wife upon no marriage bed.

“As idly there I lay alone he came  
And blew upon my side, and beat a flame  
Into my cheeks, and kindled both my eyes.  
I suffered him who took no bodily guise:  
The light clouds know whether I was to  
blame.

“Into my mouth he blew an amorous breath;  
I panted, but lay still, as quiet as death.



The whispering p'anes and sighing grasses  
know

Whether it was the wind that loved me so :  
I know not—only this, 'Q love,' he saith,

“ ‘O long beset with love, and overloved,  
O easy saint, untempted and unproved,  
O walking stilly virgin ways in hiding,  
Come out, thou art too choice for such  
abiding !

She never valued ease who never roved.

“ ‘Thou mayst not see thy lover, but he now  
Is here, and claimeth thy low moonlit brow,  
Thy wonderful eyes, and lips that part and  
pout,  
And polished throat that like a flower shoots  
out

From thy dark vesture folded and crossed  
low.

“ With that he had his way and went his way ;  
For Gods have mastery, and a maiden's nay  
Grows faint ere it is whispered ali. I sped  
Homeward with startled face and tiptoe tread,  
And up the stair, and in my chamber lay.

“ Crouching I lay and quaked, and heard the  
wind  
Wail round the house like a mad thing  
confined.

And had no rest ; turn wheresoe'er I would  
This urgent lover stormed my solitude  
And beat against the haven of my mind.

••  
“ And over all a clamour and dis-ease  
Filled earth and air, and shuddered in my  
knees •

So that I could not stand, but by the wall  
Leaned pitifully breathing. Still his call  
Volleyed against the house and tore the trees.

“ Then out my turret-window as I might  
I leaned my body to the blind wet night;  
That eager lover leapt me, circled round,  
Wreathed, folded, held me prisoner, wrapt  
and bound  
In manacles of terror and delight.

•  
“ That night he sealed me to him, and I went  
Thenceforth his leman, submiss and content ;  
So from the hall and feast, whenas I heard  
His clear voice call, I flitted like a bird  
That beats the brake, and garnered what he  
lent.

•  
“ I was no maid that was no wife ; my days  
Went by in dreams whose lights are golden  
haze  
And skies are crimson. Laughing not, nor  
crying,

I strayed all witless with my loose hair flying  
 Bearing that load that women think their  
 praise.

“And felt my breasts grow heavy with that  
 food

That women laugh to feel and think it good  
 But I went shamefast, hanging down my head  
 With girdle all too strait to serve my stead,  
 And bore an unguessed burden in my blood.

“There was a winter night he came again  
 And shook the window, till cried out my  
 pain

Unto him, saying, ‘Lord, I dare not live !  
 Lord, I must die of that which thou didst  
 give !

Pity me, ‘Lord !’ and fell. The winter rain

“Beat at the casement, burst it, and the wind  
 Filled all the room, and swept me white and  
 blind

Into the night. I heard the sound of seas  
 Beleaguer earth, I heard the roaring trees  
 Singing together. We left them far behind.

“And so he bore me into stormy Thrace,  
 Me and my load, and kissed back to my face  
 The sweet new blood of youth, and to my  
 limbs

## OREITHYIA

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The winç of life ; and there I bore him twins,  
Zethes and Calais, in a rock-bound place."

Oreithyia, by the North Wind carried  
To stormy Thrace, think you of how you  
tarried

And let him woo and wed? " Ah, no, for  
now

He's kissed all Athens from my open brow.  
I am the Wind's wife, wooed and won and  
married."

1897.



## CLYTIÉ

HEARKEN, O passers, what thing  
Fortuned in Hellas. A maid,  
Lissom and white as the roe,  
Lived recess'd in a glade.  
Clytié, Hamadryad,  
She was called that I sing—  
Flower so fair, so frail, that to bring her a woe,  
Surely a pitiful thing !

A wild bright creature of trees,  
Brooks, and the sun among leaves.  
Clytié, grown to be maid :  
Ah, she had eyes like the sea's  
Iris of green and blue !  
White as sea-foam her brows,  
And her hair reedy and gold ;  
So she grew and waxt supple and fit to be  
spouse  
In a king's palace of old.

All in a kirtle of green,  
With her tangle of red-gold hair,

In the live heart of an oak,  
 Clytié, harbouring there,  
 Thronéd there as a queen,  
 Clytié wondering woke :  
 Ah, child, what set thee too high for thy  
     sweet demesne,  
 And who ponder'd the doleful stroke ?

For the child that was maiden grown,  
 The queen of the forest places,  
 Clytié, Hamadryad,  
 Tired of the joy she had,  
 And the kingdom that was her own ;  
 And tired of the quick wood-races,  
 And joy of herself in the pool when she  
     wonder'd down,  
 And tired of her budded graces.

And the child lookt up to the Sun  
 And the burning track of his car  
 In the ~~blue~~ <sup>blue</sup> ~~road~~ <sup>road</sup> serene above her :  
 " O King Sun, be thou my lover,  
 For my beauty is just begun.  
 I am fresh and fair as a star ;  
 Come, lie where the lilies are :  
 Behold, I am fair and dainty and white all over,  
 And I waste in the wood unknown ! "

Rose-flusht, daring, she strain'd  
 Her young arms up, and she voiced  
 The wild desire of her heart.

The woodland heard her, the faun,  
 The satyr, and things that start,  
 Peering, heard her; the dove, crooning,  
     complained  
 In the pine-tree by the lawn.  
 Only the runnel rejoiced  
 In his rushy hollow apart  
 To see her beauty flash up  
 White and red as the dawn.

Sorrow, ye passers-by,  
 The quick lift of her word,  
 The crimson blush of her pride !  
 Heard her the heavens' lord  
 In his flaming seat in the sky :  
 "Overbold of her years that will not be  
     denied ;  
 She would be the Sun-God's bride !".  
 His brow it was like the flat of a sword,  
 And levin the glance of his side.

And he bent unto her, and his mouth  
 Burnt her like coals of fire ;  
 He gazed with passionate eyes,  
 Like flame that kindles and dries,  
 And his breath sucked hers as the white rage  
     of the South  
 Draws life ; his desire  
 Was like to a tiger's drouth.  
 What shall the slim maiden avail ?  
 Alas, and alas for her youth !



Tremble, O maids, that would set  
 Your love-longing to the Sun !  
 For Clytié mourn, and take heed  
 How she loved her king and did bleed  
 Ere kissing had yet begun.  
 For lo ! one shaft from his terrible eyes she  
     met,  
 And it burnt to her soul, and anon  
 She paled, and the fever-fret  
 Did bite to her bones ; and wan  
 She fell to rueing the deed.

Mark ye, maidens, and cower !  
 Lo, for an end of breath,  
 Clytié, hardy and frail,  
 Anguisht after her death.  
 For the Sun-flower droops and is pale  
 When her king hideth his power,  
 And ever draggeth the woe of her piteous  
     tale,  
 As a ~~woman~~ that laboureth  
 Yet never reacheth the hour :  
 So Clytié yearns to the Sun, for her wraith  
 Moans in the bow'd sunflower.

Clytié, Hamadryad,  
 Called was she that I sing :  
 Flower so fair and frail that to work her  
     this woe ;  
 Surely a pitiful thing !

## LAI OF GOBERTZ<sup>1</sup>

OF courteous Limozin wight,  
Gobertz, I will indite :  
From Poicebot had he his right  
Of gentlehood ;  
Made monk in his own despite  
In San Léonart the white,  
Withal to sing and to write  
*Coblas* he could.

Learning had he, and rare  
Music, and *gai saber* :  
No monk with him to compare  
In that monast'ry.  
Full lusty he was to bear  
Cowl and chaplet of hair  
God willeth monks for to wear  
For sanctity.

There in dortoir as he lay,  
To this Gobertz, by my fay,

<sup>1</sup> I owe the substance of this *lai* to my friend Ezra Pound, who unearthed it, *ψαμάθω ελυμένα πολλῇ*, in some Provençal repertory.

Came fair women to play  
     In his sleep ;  
 Then he had old to pray,  
 Fresh and silken came they,  
 With eyen saucy and gray  
     That set him weep.

May was the month, and soft  
 The singing nights ; up aloft  
 The quarter moon swam and scoffed  
     His unease.  
 Rose this Gobertz, and doffed  
 His habit, and left that croft,  
 Crying *Eleison* oft  
     At Venus' knees.

Heartly the road and the town  
 Mauléon, over the down,  
 Sought he, and the renown  
     Of Savaric ;  
 To that good knight he knelt down,  
 Asking of him in bown  
 Almesse of laurel crown  
     For his music.

Fair him Savaric spake,  
 " If *coblas* you know to make,  
 Song and music to wake  
     For your part,  
 Horse and lute shall you take

Of *Jongleur*, lightly forsake  
 Cloister for woodland brake  
 • With good heart."

Down the high month of May  
 Now rideth Gobertz his way  
 To Aix, to Puy, to Alais,  
 To Albi the old ;  
 In Toulouse mindeth to stay  
 With Count Simon the Gay,  
 There to abide what day •  
 Love shall hold.

Shrill riseth his song:  
*Cobla, lai, or tenzon,*  
 None can render him wrong  
 In that *meinie*—  
 Love alone, that erelong  
 Showed him in all that throng  
 Of ladies Tibors the young,  
 None but she.

She was high-hearted and fair,  
 Low-breasted, with hair  
 Gilded, and eyes of vair  
 In burning face : •  
 On her Gobertz astare,  
 Looking, stood quaking there  
 To see so debonnaïr  
 Hold her place.

Proud *donzela* and free,  
 To clip nor to kiss had she  
 Talént, nor for minstrelsy

Was she fain ;  
 Mistress never wôuld be,  
 Nor master have ; but her fee  
 She vowed to sweet Chastity,  
 Her suzerain.

Then this Gobertz anon  
 Returneth to Mauléon,  
 To Savaric maketh moan  
 On his knees.

Other pray'r hath he none  
 Save this, " Sir, let me begone  
 Whence I came, since fordone  
 My expertise."

Quod Savaric, " Hast thou sped  
 So ill in *amors* ? " Answeréd  
 This Gobertz, " By my head,  
 She scorneth me."

" *Hauberc* and arms then, instead  
 Of lute and begarlanded  
 Poll, take you," he said,  
 " For errantry."

Now rides he out, a dubbed knight,  
 The Spanish road, for to fight  
 Paynimry ; day and night  
 Urgeth he ;

In Saragoza the bright,  
And Pampluna with might  
Seeketh he what respite  
For grief there be.

War-dimmed grew his gear,  
Grim his visage ; in fear  
Listened Mahound his cheer  
Deep in Hell.  
Fled his legions to hear  
Gobertz the knight draw near.  
Now he closeth the year  
In Compostell.

Offering there hath he made  
Saint James, candles him paid,  
Gold on the shrine hath laid ;  
Now Gobertz  
Is for Toulouse, where that maid  
Tibors wonned unafraid  
Of Love and his accolade  
That breaketh hearts.

He rode north and by east,  
Nor rider spared he nor beast,  
Nor tempered spur till at least  
Forth of Spain ;  
Not for mass-bell nor priest,  
For fast-day nor yet for feast  
Stayed he, till voyage ceased  
In Aquitaine.

## LAI OF GOBERTZ

Now remaineth to tell  
 What this Gobertz befell,  
 When that he sought hostel  
     In his land.

Dined he well, drank he well,  
 Envy then had somedeal  
 With women free in *bordel*  
     For to spend.

In poor *albere* goeth he  
 Where bought pleasure may be,  
 Careless proffereth fee  
     For his bliss.

O Gobertz, look to thee.  
 Such a sight shalt thou see  
 Will make the red blood to flee  
     Thy heart, ywis.

Fair woman they bring him in  
 Shamefast in her burning sin,  
 All afire is his skin

*Par amors.*

Look not of her look to win,  
 Dare not lift up her chin,  
 Gobertz ; in that soiled fond thing  
     Lo, Tibors !

“O love, O love, out, alas !  
 That it should come to this pass,  
 And thou be even as I was  
     In green youth,

Whenas delight and solace  
Served I with wantonness,  
And burned anon like the grass  
    •To this ruth !”

But then list she her sad eyes, ‘  
Gray like wet morning skies,  
That wait the sun to arise,  
    •Tears to amend.  
“Gobertz, *amic*,” so she cries,  
By Jesus’ agonies  
Hither come I by lies  
    Of false friend.

“Sir Richart de Laund l  
Who fair promised me plight  
Of word and ring, on a night  
    Of no fame ;  
So then evilly bright  
Had his will and delight  
Of me, and fled unrequit  
    For my shame !

“Alas, and now to my thought  
Flieth the woe that I wrought  
Thee, Gobertz, that distraught  
    Thou didst fare. •  
Now a vile thing of nought  
Fare I that once was so haught  
And free, and could not be taught  
    By thy care.”



But Gobertz seeth no less  
 Her honour and her sweetness,  
 Soon her small hand to kiss

Taketh he,  
 Saying, "Now for that stress  
 Drave thee here thou shalt bless  
 God, for so ending this  
 Thy penury."

Yet she would bid him away,  
 Seeking her sooth to say,  
 In what woful array

She was cast.  
 "Nay," said he, "but, sweet may,  
 Here must we bide until day :  
 Then to church and to pray  
 Go we fast."

Now then to all his talént,  
 Seeing how he was bent,  
 Him the comfort she lent  
 Of her mind.

Cried Gobertz, well content,  
 "If love by dreariment  
 Cometh, that was well spent,  
 As I find."

Thereafter somewhat they slept,  
 When to his arms she had crept  
 For comfort, and freely wept  
 Sin away.

Up betimes then he leapt,  
Calling her name : forth she stept  
Meek, disposed, to accept  
    What he say.

By hill road taketh he her  
To the gray nuns of Beaucaire,  
There to shred off her hair  
    And take veil.  
Himself to cloister will fare  
Monk to be, with good care  
For their two souls. May his pray'r  
    Them avail !



## THE SAINTS' MAYING

SINCE green earth is awake  
Let us now pastime take,  
Not serving wantonness  
Too well, nor niggardness,  
Which monks of men would make.

But clothed like earth in green,  
With jocund hearts and clean,  
We will take hands and go  
Singing where quietly blow  
The flowers of Spring's demesne.

The cuckoo haileth loud  
The open sky; no cloud  
Doth fleck the earth's blue tent;  
The land laughs, well content  
To put off winter shroud.

Now, since 'tis Easter Day,  
All Christians may have play;  
The young Saints, all agaze  
For Christ in Heaven's maze,  
May laugh who wont to pray.

Then welcome to our round  
They light on homely ground:—  
Agnes, Saint Cecily,  
Agatha, Dorothy,  
Margaret, Hildegondē;

Next come with Barbara  
Lucy and Ursula;  
And last, queen of the Nine,  
Clear-eyed Saint Catherine  
Joyful arrayeth her.

Then chooseth each her lad,  
And after frolic had  
Of dance and carolling  
And playing in a ring,  
Seek all the woodland shade.

And there for each his lass  
Her man a nosegay has,  
Which better than word spoken  
Might stand to be her token  
And emblem of her grace.

For Cecily, who bent  
Her slim white neck and went  
To Heaven a virgin still,  
The nodding daffodil,  
That bends but is not shent.

Lucy, whose wounded eyes  
Opened in Heaven star-wise,

The lady-smock, whose light  
Doth prank the grass with white,  
Taketli for badge and prize.

Because for Lord Christ's hest  
Men shore thy warm bright breast,  
Agatha, see thy part  
Showed in the burning heart  
Of the white crocus best.

What fate was Barbara's  
Shut in the tower of brass,  
We figure and hold up  
Within the stiff king-cup  
That crowns the meadow grass.

Agnes, than whose King Death  
Stayed no more delicate breath  
On earth, we give for dower  
Wood-sorrel, that frail flower  
That Spring first quickeneth.

Dorothy, whose shrill voice  
Bade Heathendom rejoice,  
The sweet-breath'd cowslip hath ;  
And Margaret, who in death  
Saw Heaven, her pearly choice.

Then she of virgin brood  
Whom Prince of Britain woo'd,  
Ursula, takes by favour

The hyacinth whose savour  
Enskies the sunny wood.

Hildegonde, whose spirit high  
The Cross did not deny,  
Yet blusht to feel the shame,  
Anemones must claim,  
Whose roses early die.

Last, she who gave in pledge  
Her neck to the wheel's edge,  
Taketh the fresh primrose  
Which (even as she her foes)  
Redeems the wintry hedge.

So garlanded, entwined,  
Each as may prompt her mind,  
The Saints renew for Earth  
And Heaven such seemly mirth  
As God once had design'd.

And when the day is done,  
And veil'd the goodly Sun,  
Each man his maid by right  
Doth kiss and bid Good-night ;  
And home goes every one.

The maids to Heaven do hie  
To serve God soberly ;  
The lads, their loves in Heaven,  
What lowly work is given  
They do, to win the sky.

# THE ARGIVE WOMEN<sup>1</sup>

CHTHONŒ  
RHODOPE  
GORGON

MYRTILLA  
PASIPHASSA  
SIRYS

## SCENE

The women's house in the House of Paris in Troy.

TIME.—The Tenth year of the War.

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*Helen's women are lying alone in the twilight hour. Chthonœ presently rises and throws a little incense upon the altar flame. Then she begins to speak to the Image of Aphrodite in a low and tired voice.*

## CHTHONŒ

GODDESS of burning and little rest,  
By the hand swaying on thy breast,  
By glancing eye and slow sweet smile

<sup>1</sup> *Helen Redeemed*, the first poem in this book, was originally conceived as a drama. Here is a scene from it, the first after the Prologue, which would have been spoken by Odysseus. The action of the play would have begun with the entry of Helen.



Tell me what long look or what guile  
Of thine it was that like a spear  
Pierced her heart, who caged me here  
In this close house, to be with her  
Mistress at once and prisoner !

Far from earth and her pleasant ways  
I lie, whose nights are as my days  
In this dim house, where on the wall  
I watch the shadows rise and fall  
And know not what is rekt or done  
By men and horses out in the sun,  
Nor heed their traffic, nor their cheer  
As forth they go or back, but hear  
The fountain plash into the pond,  
The brooding doves, and sighs of fond  
Lovers whose lips yearn as they sever  
For longer joy, joy such as never  
Hath man but in the mind. But what  
Men do without, that I know not  
Who see them but as shadows thrown  
Upon a screen. I see them blown  
Like clouds of flies about the plain  
Where the winds sweep them and make vain  
Their panoplies. They hem the verge  
Of this high wall to guard us—urge  
Galloping horses into war  
And meet in shock of battle, far  
Below us and our dreams : withal  
Ten years have past us in this thrall  
Since Helen came with eyes agleam  
To Troy, and trod the ways of dream.

## GORGŌ

Men came about us, crying, "The Greeks!  
Ships out at sea with high-held peaks  
Like questing birds!" But I lay still  
Kissing, nor turned.

## RHODOPE

So I, until  
The herald broke into my sleep,  
Crying Agamemnon on the deep  
With ships from high Mykenai. Then  
I minded he was King of Men—  
But not of women in the arms  
They loved.

## MYRTILLA

I heard their shrill  
Faint and far off, like an old fame.  
Below this guarded house men came—  
Chariots and horses clasht; they cried,  
King Agamemnon in his pride,  
Or Hector, or young Diomedé;  
But I was kissing, could not heed  
Aught save the eyes that held mine bound.  
Anon a hush—anon the sound  
Of hooves resistless, pounding—a cry,  
"Achilles! Save yourselves!" But I—  
Clinging I lay, and sighed in sign  
That love must weary at last, even mine—  
Even mine, Sweetheart!

## PASIPHASSA

W<sup>10</sup> watcht when fla  
 Lord Hector like a meteor, dared.  
 The high stockade and fired the ships?  
 I watcht his lips who had had my lips.

## SITYS

And when he slew Menoikios' son,  
 Sister, what then?

## PASIPHASSA

My cheek was wan  
 For lack of kissing—so I blew  
 On slumbering lids to draw anew  
 The eyes of him who had loved me well,  
 But now was faint.

## CHTHONOË

O Kypris, tell  
 The deeds of men, not lovers!

## RHODOPE

Here

Came one all palsied in his fear,  
 Chattering and white, to Paris abed,  
 Flusht in his sleep—told Hector dead,  
 Dead and dishonoured, while he slept.  
 He sighed and turned. But Helen wept.

## GORGON

Not I. I turned and felt warm draught  
Of breath upon my cheek, and laught  
Softly, and snuggling, slept.

## CHTHONÆ

Fie, fie !

Goddess, drugged in thy dreams we lie,  
Logs, not women, logs in the sun !

## SITYS.

Thou art sated. So fretteth One,  
The very fount of Love's sweet well,  
The chord of Love made visible,  
Sickened of her own loveliness,  
Haggard as hawk too long in jess,  
Aching for flight.

## MYRTILLA

Recall the bout  
When Paris armed him and went out,  
Into the lists, and all men thronged  
To see——

## SITYS

Lord Paris and him he wronged  
Fight for her, who should have her ! We  
stood  
Upon the walls, and she with her hood

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Close to her cheek.\* But I saw the flicker  
In her blue eyes !

PASIPHASSA

But I was quicker,  
And saw the man she looked upon,  
And after what her blue eyes shone  
Like cyanus in morning light.

GORGO

Husband and lover she saw fight,  
Man to man, with death between.

RHODOPE

Hatred coucht, as long and lean  
As a lone wolf, on her man's crest—

PASIPHASSA

And bit the Trojan !

CHTHONÆ

Thine was the rest,  
Goddess ! And Helen lit the fire,  
With her disdain, of his desire.

MYRTILLA

Her eyes burned like the frosty stars  
Of winter midnight.

## THE ARGIVE WOMEN

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PASIPHASSA

His the scars !  
Bitten in his wax-pale cheek.

CHTHONOE

Nay, in his heart—

SITYS

Nay, in his bleak  
And writhen smile you see it !

GORGON

Nay !  
In his sick soul.

RHODOPE

Let him go his way !  
Hear my thought of a happier thing—  
Sparta's trees in flood of spring  
Where Eurotas' banks abrim  
Drown the reeds, and foam-clots swim  
Like a scattered brood of duck !

MYRTILLA

Flowers anod ! White flowers to pluck,  
Stiffened in the foamy curds !  
Ah, the green thickets quick with birds !

SITYS

Calling Itys ! Itys ! Itys !

PASIPHASSA

She calls not here—her house it is  
In Sparta !

RHODOPE (*with a sob*)

Peace !

CHTHONŒ

From my heart a cry—  
Send me back, Goddess, ere I die  
To those dear places and clean things—  
To see my people, feel the wings  
Of the gray night fold over me,  
And touch my mother's knees, and be  
Her child, as long ago I was  
Before I lay burning in Ilios !

[*They hide their faces in their knees.  
Then one by one they sing.*]

Let me sing an old sweet air,  
Mother of Argos, to Thee,  
For hope in my heart is fair  
As light on the hills seen from afar at sea ;  
And my weary eyes turn there  
As to the haven where my soul would be.

RHODOPE

I will arise and make choice  
The house of my tumbled breast,  
For she cometh, I hear the voice

## THE ARGIVE WOMEN 181

Of her wings of healing, and she shall be my  
 guest ;  
 And my joys shall be her joys,  
 And my home her home, O wind of the  
 South West !

### GORGO

As a bird that listens and thrills,  
 Hidden deep in the night,  
 For the sound of the little rills  
 That run musically towards the light ;  
 As a hart to the high hills  
 Turneth his dying eyes, my soul takes flight.

### MYRTILLA

Ah, to be folded deep  
 In the shade of Taygetus,  
 In my mother's arms to sleep  
 Even as a child when I lay harboured thus !  
 Oh, that I were as thy sheep,  
 Lacedaemon, my land, cradle and nurse of us !

### PASIPHASSA

In Argos they sow the grain,  
 In Troy blood is their sowing ,  
 There a green mantle covers the plain  
 Where the sweet green corn and sweet short  
 grass are growing ;  
 But here passion and pain—  
 Blood and dust upon earth, and a hot wind  
 blowing.



## 'SITYS

To the hold on the far red hill  
 From the hold on the wide green lea,  
 Over the running water, follow who will  
 Therapnae's hawk with the dove of Amyklæ.  
 But I would lie husht and still,  
 And feel the new grass growing quick over  
 me !

*[The scene grows dark as they sit.  
 Their eyes are full of tears.  
 Presently one looks up, listening,  
 then another, then another. They  
 are all alert.]*

## CHTHONOË

Who prayeth peace ? I feel her peace  
 Steal through me as a quiet air  
 Enters the house with sweet increase  
 Of light to healing, praise to prayer !

## RHODOPE

What do I know of guiltiness  
 When she is here, and with grave eyes  
 Seeketh the ways of quietness  
 And lampeth them ?

## GORGO

• Arise, arise !

*[They all stand waiting.]*

## MYRTILLA

Hark ! Her footfall like the dew—

## PASIPHASSA

As a flower by frost made sere  
Long before the sun breaks through,  
Feeleth him, I know her near.

[Helen stands in the doorway.]

## CHTHONŒ

This is she, the source of light,  
Source of light and end of it,  
Argive Helen, slim and sweet,  
For whose bosom and delight,  
For whose eyes, those wells of peace,  
Paris wrought, as well he might,  
•Ten years' woe for Troy and Greece.

## RHODOPE

Starry wonder that she was,  
Caged like sea-bird, in his arms,  
See her passion thrill, then pass  
From him who, doting on her charms,  
So became abominable.  
Watch her bosom dip and swell,  
See her nostrils fan and curve  
At his touch who loved not well,

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But loved too much, who broke the spell ;  
Watch her proud head stiffen and swerve.

GORGON

Upon the wall with claspt white hands  
See her vigil keep intent,  
Argive Helen, lo ! she stands  
Looking seaward where the fires  
Hem the shore innumerable ;  
Sign of that 'avenging host,  
All Achaia's chivalry,  
Past the tongue of man to tell,  
Peers and kindred of her sires  
Come to win back Helen lost.

MYRTILLA

There to her in that gray hour  
That gray hour before the sun,  
Cometh he she waiteth for,  
Menelaus like a ghost,  
Like a dry leaf tempest-tost,  
Stalking restless, her reproach.

PASIPHASSA

There alone, those two, long severed been,  
Eye each other, one wild heart between.

SITYS

"O thou ruinous face,  
O thou fatally fair,

O the pity of thee !  
 What dost thou there,  
 Watching the madness of me ? ”

CHTHONÆ

Him seemed her eyes were pools of dark  
 To drown him, yet no word she spake ;  
 But gazing, grave as a lonely house,  
 All her wonder thrilled to wake..

RAODOPE

“ By thy roses and snow,  
 By thy sun-litten hair,  
 By thy low bosom and slow  
 Pondered kisses, O hear !

“ By thy glimmering eyes,  
 By thy burning cheek,  
 By thy murmuring sighs,  
 Speak, Helen, O speak !

“ Ruinous Face, O Ruinous Face,  
 Art thou come so early,” he said,  
 “ So early forth from the wicked bed ? ”

GORGO

Him she pondered, grave and still,  
 Stirring not from her safe place :  
 He marked the glow, he felt the thrill,  
 He saw the dawn new in her face.

## MYRTILLA

Within her low voice wailed the tone  
 Of one who grieves and prays for death :  
 " Lord, I am come to be alone,  
 Alone here with my sorrow," she saith.

## PASIPHASSA

" False wife, what pity was thine  
 For hearth and altar, for man and child ?  
 What is thy sorrow worth unto mine ?"  
 She rocked, moaning, " I was beguiled !"

## SITYS

Ten years' woe for Troy and Greece  
 By her begun, the slim, the sweet,  
 Ended by her in final peace  
 Of him who loved her first of all ;  
 Nor ever swerved from his high passion,  
 But through misery and shame  
 Saw her spirit like a flame  
 Eloquent of her sacred fashion—  
 Hers whose eyes are homes of light,  
 To which she tends, from which she came.

## GNATHO

GNATHO, Satyr, homing at dusk;  
Trotting home like a tired dog,  
By mountain slopes twist the junipers  
And flamed oleanders near the sea,  
Found a girl-child asleep in a fleece,  
Frail as wax, golden and rose ;  
Whereat at first he skipt aside  
And stayed him, nosing and peering, whereto  
Next he crept, softly breathing,  
Blinking his fear. None was there  
• To guard ; the sun had dipt in the sea,  
Faint fire empurpled the flow  
• Of heaving water ; no speck, no hint  
Of oar or wing on the main, on the deep  
• Sky, empty as a great shell,  
Fainting in its own glory. This thing,  
This rare breath, this miracle—  
Alone with him in the world ! • His  
To wonder, fall to, with craning eyes  
Fearfully daring ; next, since it moved not,  
Stooping, to handle, to stroke, to peer upon  
Closely, nosing its tender length,

Doglike snuffing—at last to kiss  
In reverence wonderful, lightlier far  
Than thistledown falls, brushing the Earth.  
But the child awoke and, watching him,  
cried not,

Cruddled visage, choppy hands,  
Blinking eyes, red-litten, astare,  
Horns and feet—nay, crowed and strained  
To reach this wonder.

As one a glass  
Light as foam, hued like the foam;  
A breath-bubble of fire, will carry,  
He in arms lifted his freight,  
Looking wonderfully upon it  
With scarce a breath, and humbleness  
To be so brute ebb'd to the flood  
Of pride in his new assur'd worth—  
Trusted so, who could be vile?

So to his cave in the wood he bore her,  
Fleeting swift as a fear thro' the dark trees.

There in the silence of tall trees,  
Under the soaring shafts,  
Far beneath the canopied leafage,  
In the forest whisper, the thick silences ;  
Or on the wastes  
Of sheltered mountains where the spires  
Of solemn cypress frame the descent  
Upon the blue, and open to sea—  
Here grew Ianthe maiden slim

With none to spy but this gnarled man-brute ;  
Most fair, most hid; like a wood-flower  
Slim for lack of light ; so she grew  
In flowering line of limb  
And flower of face, retired and shy,  
Urged by the bland air ; unknown,  
Lonely and lovely, husbanding  
Her great possessions—her's now,  
Another's when he cared to claim them.  
For thus went life : to lead the herds  
Of pricking deer she saw the great stags  
Battle in empty glades, then mate ;  
Thus on the mountains chose the bears,  
And in the woods she heard the wolves  
Anguishing in their loves  
Thro' the dense nights, far in the forest.  
And so collected went she, and sure  
Her time would come and with it her master.

But Gnatho watcht her under his brows  
When she lay heedless, spilling beauty—  
How ever lovelier, suppler, sleeker,  
How more desirable, how near ;  
How rightly his, how surely his—  
Then gnaw'd his cheek and turn'd his head.

For unsuspect, some aim torquing  
Rose within him and knockt at his heart  
And said, Not thine, but for reverence.  
And some wild horror desperate drove him,  
Suing a pardon from unknown Gods



For untold trespass, to seek the sea,  
 Upon whose shore, to whose cool breathing  
 He'd stretch his arms, broken with strife  
 Of self and self; and all that water  
 Steadfast lapt and surged. Came tears  
 To furrow his cheeks, came strength to  
     return  
 To her, and bear with longer breath  
 Her sweet familiarities, blind  
 Obedience to nascent blind desire—  
 Till again he lookt and burn'd again.

Thus his black ferment boil'd. O' nights  
 He'd dream and revel frenziedly  
 As with the love-stung nymphs. Awake,  
 In a chill sweat, he'd tear at himself,  
 Claw at his flesh and leap in the brook,  
 Drench the red embers of his vice  
 Into a mass abhorred. Clean then,  
 He'd seek his bed and pass unscath'd  
 The bower of fern where the sleek limbs  
 Of white Ianthé, mesht in her hair,  
 Lay lax in sleep. But Gnatho now  
 Saw only God, as on some still peak  
 Snowy and lonely under the stars  
 We look, and see God in all that calm.

One night of glamour, under a moon  
 That seemed to steep the air with gold,  
 They two sat stilly and watcht the sea

Tremulously heaving over a path  
 Of light like a river of molten gold.  
 Warm blew the breeze to land ; she lean'd  
 Her idle head, idly played  
 Her fingers in his belt, and he  
 Embracing held her, yielding, subdued ;  
 Sideways saw the curve of her cheek,  
 Downcast lashes, droopt lip  
 Which seem'd to court his pleasure—

Then

On waves of fire came racing his needs  
 With zest of rage to possess and tear  
 That which his frenzy, maskt as love,  
 Courted : so he lean'd to her ear,  
 Thrilled in torrents hoarse his case—  
 “ Love, I burn, I burn !  
 Slake me, love ! ” He raved in whisper.  
 And she lookt up with her wide full eyes,  
 Saying, “ My love ! ” and yielded herself.

Deep night settled on hill and plain,  
 The moon went out, the concourse of stars  
 Lay strewn above, and with golden eyes  
 Peered on them lockt. Far and faint  
 The great stags belled ; far and faint  
 Quested the wolves ; the leopards' howling  
 Lent desolation to night ; and low  
 The night-jar purr'd. At sea one light  
 Swayed restlessly, and on the rocks  
 Sounded the tireless lapping deep.  
 Lockt they lay thro' all the silences.

Dawn stole in with whimper of rain  
 And a wailing wind from the sea—  
 Gray sea, gray dawn and scurrying clouds  
 And scud of rain. The fisher boat,  
 The sands, the headlands fringed with broom  
 And tamarisk were blotted.

Alone, .

Caged in the mist of earth  
 That beat his torment back to himself,  
 So that in vain he sought for the Gods,  
 And lifted up hands in vain  
 To witness this white wreck prone and still—  
 Gnatho the Satyr blinkt on his work.

## TO THE GODS OF THE COUNTRY

SUN and MOON, shine upon me , ,  
Make glad my days and clean my nights !

O Earth, whose child I am,  
Grant me thy patience !

O Heaven, whose heir I may be,  
Keep quick my hope !

Your steadfastness I need, O Hills ;  
O Rain, thy kindness !

Snow, keep me pure ;  
O Fire, teach me thy pride !

From you, ye Winds, I ask your blitheness !

1909.



FOURTEEN SONNETS

1896



## ALMA SDEGNOSA

Not that dull spleen which serves i' the world  
for scorn,

Is hers ! watch from far off, worshipping  
As in remote Chaldaea, the ancient king  
Adored the star that heralded the morn.

Her proud content she bears as a flag is borne  
Tincted the hue royal ; or as a wing

It lifts her soaring, near the daylight spring,  
Whence, if she lift, our days must pass  
forlorn.

The pure deriving of her spirit-state  
Is so remote from men and their believing,  
They shrink when she is cold, and estimate  
That hardness which is but a God's dismay :  
As when the Heaven-sent sprite thro' Hell  
sped cleaving,  
Only the gross air checkt him on his way.



## THE WINDS' POSSESSION

WHEN winds blow high and leaves begin to  
fall,

And the wan sunlight flits before the blast ;  
When fields are brown and crops are garnered  
all,

And rooks, like mastered ships, drift wide  
and fast ;

Maid Artemis, that feeleth her young blood  
Leap like a freshet river for the sea,  
Speedeth abroad with hair blown in a flood  
To snuff the salt west wind and wanton free.

Then would you know how brave she is, how  
high

Her ancestry, how kindred to the wind,  
Mark but her flashing feet, her ravisht eye  
That takes the boist'rous weather and feels it  
kind :

And hear her eager voice, how tuned it is  
To Autumn's clarion shrill for Artemis.

## ASPETTO REALE

THAT hour when thou and Grief were first  
acquainted

Thou wrotest, "Come, for I have lookt on  
death,"

Piteous I held my indeterminate breath  
And sought thee out, and saw how he had  
painted

Thine eyes with rings of black ; yet never  
fainted.

Thy radiant immortality underneath

Such stress of dark ; but then, as one that  
saith,

"I know Love liveth," sat on by death  
untainted.

O to whom Grief too poignant was and dry  
To sow in thee a fountain crop of tears !

O youth, O pride, set too remote and high  
For touch of solace that gives grace to men !  
Thy life must be our death, thy hopes our  
fears :

We weep, thou lookest strangely—we know  
thee then !

## KIN CONFESSED

LONG loving, all our love was husbanded  
Until one morning on the brown hillside,  
One misty Autumn morn when Sun did hide  
His radiance, yet was felt. No words we  
said,

But in one flash transfigured, glorified,  
All her heart's tumult beating white and red,  
She fell prone on her face and hid her wide  
Over-brimmed eyes in dewy fern.

I prayed,  
Then spake, "In us two now is manifest  
That throbbing kindred whereof thou art,  
graft

And I the grafted, in this holy place."  
She, turning half, with sober shame confess  
Discovery, then hid her rosy face.

I read her wilding heart, and my heart  
laught.

## QUEL GIORNO PIÙ .

THAT day—it was the last of many days,  
Nor could we know when such days might  
•• be given

Again—we read how Dante trod the ways  
Of utmost Hell, and how his heart was riven  
By sad Francesca, whose sin was forgiven  
So far that, on her Paolo fixing gaze,  
She supt on his again, and thought it  
Heaven,  
She knew her gentler fate and felt it praise.

We read that lovers' tale ; each lookt at each ;  
But one was fearless, innocent of guile ;  
So did the other learn what she could teach :  
We read no more, we kiss'd not, but a smile  
Of proud possession flasht, hover'd a while  
Twixt soul and soul. There was no need for  
speech.

## ABSENCE

WHEN she had left us but a little while  
Methought I sensed her spirit here and  
there

About my house : upon the empty stair,  
Her robe brushed softly ; o'er her chamber  
still

There lay her fragrant presence to beguile  
Numb heart, dead heart. I knelt before  
her chair,

And praying felt her hand laid on my hair,  
Felt her sweet breath, and guess'd her wistful  
smile.

Then thro' my tears I lookt about the room,  
But she was gone. I heard my heart beat  
fast ;

The street was silent ; I could not see her  
now.

Sorrow and I took up our load, and past  
To where our station was with heads bent low,  
And autumn's death-moan shiver'd thro' the  
gloom.

## PRESENCE

WHEN she had left us but a little while,  
I still could hear the ringing of her voice,  
Still see athwart the dusk her shy half-smile  
And that sweet trust wherein I most rejoice.

Then in her self-same tones I heard, "Go  
thou,  
Set to that work appointed thee to do,  
Remembering I am with thee here and now,  
Watchful as ever. See, my eyes shine true!"

I lookt, and saw the concourse of clear stars,  
Steadfast, of limpid candour, and could  
discover

Her soul look on me thro' the prison-bars  
Which slunk like sin from such an honest  
Lover :

And thro' the vigil-pauses of that night  
She beam'd on me ; and my soul felt her  
light.

## DREAM ANGUISH

My thought of thee is tortured in my sleep—

Sometimes thou art near beside me, but a  
cloud

Doth grudge me thy pale face, and rise to  
creep

Slowly about thee, to lap thee in a shroud ;

And I, as standing by my dead, to weep

Desirous, cannot weep, nor cry aloud.

Or we must face the clamouring of a crowd  
Hissing our shame ; and I who ought to  
keep

Thine honour safe and my betrayed heart  
proud,

Knowing thee true, must watch a chill doubt  
leap

The tired faith of thee, and thy head  
bow'd,

Nor budge while the gross world holdeth thee  
cheap !

Or there are frost-bound meetings, and  
reproach

At parting, furtive snatches full of fear ;  
Love grown a pain ; we bleed to kiss, and  
kiss  
Because we bleed for love ; the time doth  
broach  
Shame, and shame teareth at us till we tear  
Our hearts to shreds—yet wilder love for  
this !



## HYMNIA-BEATRIX

BEFORE you pass and leave me gaunt and  
chill

Alone to do what I have joyed in doing  
In your glad sight, suffer me, nor take ill

If I confess you prize and me pursuing.

As the rapt Tuscan lifted up his eyes  
Whither his Lady led, and lived with her,  
Strong in her strength, and in her wisdom  
wise,

Love-taught with song to be her thurifer ;

So I, that may no nearer stand than he  
To minister about the holy place,  
Am well content to watch my Heaven in  
thee

And read my Credo in thy sacred face.

For even as Beatrix Dante's wreath did  
bind,  
So, Hymnia, hast thou imparadised my mind.

## LUX E TENEBRIS

I THANK all Gods that I can let thee go,  
Lady; without one thought, one base desire  
To tarnish that clear vision I gained by fire,  
One stain in me I would not have thee know.  
That is great might indeed that moves me so  
To look upon thy Form, and yet aspire  
To look not there, rather than I should  
mire  
That wingéd Spirit that haunts and guards  
thy brow.

So now I see thee go, secure in this  
That what I have is thee, that whole of thee  
Whereof thy fair infashioning is sign :  
For I see Honour, Love, and Wholesomeness,  
And striving ever to reach them, and to be  
As they, I keep thee still ; for they are thine.

## DUTY

OH, I am weak to serve thee as I ought ;  
My shroud of flesh obscures thy deity,  
So thy sweet Spirit that should embolden  
me  
To shake my wings out wide, serves me for  
nought,  
But receives tarnish, vile dishonour, wrought  
By that thou camest to bless—Or agony  
And unendurable shame! that, loving thee,  
I dare not love, fearing my poisonous  
thought!

Man is too vile for any such high grace,  
For that he seeks to honour he can but mar ;  
So had I rather shun thy starry face  
And fly the exultation to know thee near—  
For if one glance from me wrought thee a  
scar  
'Twould not be death, but life that I should  
fear.

## WAGES

SOMETIMES the spirit that never leaves me  
quite

Taps at my heart when thou art in the way,  
Saying, Now thy Queen cometh : therefore  
pray,

Lest she should see thee vile, and at the sight  
Shiver and fly back piteous to the light

That wanes when she is absent. Then, as  
I may,

I wash my soiled hands and muttering, say,  
Lord, make me clean ; robe Thou me in Thy  
white !

So for a brief space, clad in ecstasy,  
Pure, disembodied, I fail to kiss thy feet,  
And sense thy glory throbbing round about ;  
Whereafter, rising, I hold thee in a sweet  
And gentle converse that lifts me up to be,  
When thou art gone, strange to the gross  
world's rout.

## EYE-SERVICE

MESEEMS thine eyes are two still-folded lakes  
Wherein deep water reflects the guardian  
sky,  
Searching wherein I see how Heaven is nigh  
And our broad Earth at peace. • So my Love  
takes  
My soul's thin hands and, chafing them, she  
makes  
My life's blood lusty and my life's hope  
high  
For the strong lips and eyes of Poesy,  
To hold the world well squandered for their  
sakes.

I looked thee full this day : thine unveiled  
eyes  
Rayed their swift-searching magic forth ;  
and then  
I felt all strength that love can put in men  
Whenas they know that loveliness is wise.  
For love can be content with no less prize,  
To lift us up beyond our mortal ken.

## CLOISTER THOUGHTS

(AT WESTMINSTER)

WITHIN these long gray shadows many dead  
Lie waiting : we wait with them. Do you  
believe

That at the last the threadbare soul will  
give

All his shifts over, and stand dishevelled,  
Naked in truth? Then we shall hear it said,  
"Ye two have waited long, daring to live  
Grimly through days tormented; now  
reprieve

Awaiteth you with all these ancient dead!"

The slope sun setteth down thro' our dark  
bars

His ladder from the skies. Hand fast in  
hand,

With quiet hearts and footsteps quiet and  
slow,

Like children venturous in an unknown land

We will come to the fields whose flowers are  
stars,

And kneeling ask, "Lord, wilt Thou crown  
us now?"



## THE CHAMBER IDYLL

THE blue night falleth, the moon  
Is over the hill ; make fast,  
Fasten the latch, I am tired : come soon,  
Come! I would sleep at last .  
In your bosom, my love, my love !

The airy chamber above  
Has the lattice ajar, that night  
May breathe upon you and me, my love,  
And the moon bless our marriage-rite—  
Come, lassy, to bed, to bed !

The roof-thatch overhead  
Shall cover the stars' bright eyes ;  
The fleecy quilt shall be coverlid  
For your meek virginities,  
And your wedding, my bride, my bride !

See, we are side to side,  
Virgin in deed and name—  
Come, for love will not be denied,  
Tarry not, have no shame :  
Are we not man and bride ?

1894.





EPIGRAMMATA

1910



## THE OLD HOUSE

Mossy gray stands the House, four-square to  
the wind,  
Embosomed in the hills. The garden old  
Of yew and box, and fishpond speaks her  
mind,  
Sweet-ordered, quaint, recluse, fold within  
fold  
Of quietness ; but true and choice and  
kind—  
A sober casket for a heart of gold.

## BLUE IRIS

Blue is the Adrian sea, and darkly blue  
The Ægean ; and the shafted sun thro' them,  
That fishes grope to, gives the beamy hue  
Rayed from her iris's deep diadem.

## THE ROSEBUD

In June I brought her roses, and she cupt  
One slim bud in her hand and cherisht it,  
And put it to her mouth. 'Rose and she  
    supt  
Each other's sweetness; but the flower was  
    lit  
By her kind eyes, and glowed. Then in her  
    breast  
She laid it, blushing, warm and doubly blest.

## SPRING ON THE DOWN

When Spring blows o'er the land, and sun-  
    light flies  
Across the hills, we take the upland way.  
I have her waist, the wooing wind her eyes  
And lips and cheeks. His kissing makes her  
    gay  
As flowers. "Thou hast two lovers, O my  
    dear,"  
Say I; and she, "He takes what thou dost  
    fear."

## SNOWY NIGHT

The snow lies deep, ice-fringes hem the  
thatch;  
I knock my shoes, my Love lifts me the  
latch,  
Shows me her eyes—O frozen stars, they  
shine  
Kindly! I clasp her. Quick! her lips are  
mine.

## EVENING MOOD

Late, when the sun was smouldering down  
the west,  
She took my arm and laid her cheek to me;  
The fainting twilight held her, and I guess'd  
All she would tell, but could not let me  
see—  
Wonder and joy, the rising of her breast,  
And confidence, and still expectancy.

## THE PARTING

Breathless was she and would not have us  
part:

“Adieu, my Saint,” I said, “’tis come to  
this.”

But she leaned to me, one hand at her heart,  
And all her soul sighed trembling in a kiss.

## DEDICATION OF A BOOK

To the Fountain of my long Dream,  
To the Chalice of all my Sorrow,  
To the Lamp held up, and the Stream  
Of Light that beacons the Morrow;

To the Bow, the Quiver and Dart,  
To the Bridle-rein, to the Yoke  
Proudly upborne, to the Heart  
On Fire, to the Mercy-stroke;

To Apollo herding his Cattle,  
To Proserpina grave in Dis;  
To the high Head in the Battle,  
And the Crown—I consecrate this.



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